

# *The Grip*

by

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*For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you." Isaiah 41:13 (ESV)*

It was another assault on my mind, as the enemy of my soul took aim in that secret place that is hidden from my family and friends. *"Just another random thought,"* I initially thought. But deep down I knew that there was a strategic attack coming at me that would attempt to draw me back to that pit I had escaped long ago. It astounds me that those temptations still have any appeal to me? After all, I know the pain from the consequences of my choices. I will never forget the poison that I ingested when I drank from the cup of evil that was offered to me. How could I ever forget its bitterness and its effect? Even so, the same temptations are knocking, hoping that I will open the door and let it in. *"NO!!! No I will not let you in! I will take captive this thought and dispatch it back to the hell it comes from,"* I exclaimed. I thought I would send it back to the hell that I also escaped from, for I know how its deceptive influence promises fun without consequence, but in fact it is a bald face lie. I have been redeemed from that pit of destruction that bids me to return. Even so, the allure to my flesh nature still beckons. I can't listen to it. I must stand firm, for much is at stake should I fall. After all, when it comes down to it, what does it offer except empty promises and drastic hurt?

I will never forget that place of agony where I once lived. There was a hopelessness and loneliness that few discuss, but all who live there agree is present in their lives. The memories of that life caused me to cry out:

*"Oh God, please let me never forget how You loved me even when I was in that place, and You redeemed me from its clutches. Even though I knew You not, nor did I know my Redeemer, You sent Him to rescue me, to draw me out of that dark abyss. I was born into that place, as all people are. I thought I was safe and secure, and that all would be well for me. I would learn that this is a delusion that I would soon find out was a product of the Great Deceiver. My life and pursuits then seemed so natural, for it was the culture, and most everyone had the same pursuits. But it is only a matter of time before the reality of the darkness that influences us is leading us deeper into an evil grasp that holds a death grip on us. That place is a deep, dark place that goes beyond those doors of seduction and invites us to come and linger within. It appeals to a desire within us to take a peek, or sample a small taste or two of the seducing sweets that lure us to its grasp. But like a flytrap, once we step in, we are taken into its grasp and drawn to the core of darkness where few escape. Father, I've been there, and I know how hard it was to escape. But You came and got me, and showed me how to avoid its continued seduction. But why does the temptation still linger?"*

God answered me:

*“When you came to know Me as your Redeemer, you were loved by Me no more or no less while you were in that pit. My love for you exceeded your temptations and failures and imperfections, and by My grace, I have set you free from the consequences of your sin. Your soul was made secure, and I adopted you into My family. But, your carnal mind is still fertile ground for the enemy’s work, for it takes time to learn how to battle against his schemes. Your mind is a place where he deceives you into thinking that your sinful imaginations are harmless, and your thoughts will never leave that place. But what a fool my child is to believe the Seducer’s lies. Those thoughts never stay put, and even when they are not evident to others, they are evident to Me, and they put a wedge between our intimacy. Those sinful thoughts will always work to the surface in some way and cause havoc. It is only a matter of time. Make no mistake in thinking that this is anything less than the clear intention of the Great Seducer. He wants a grip of evil to remain in your life even though you are redeemed, and to divide you from the abiding relationship you could have with Me. This is why the temptations never cease. The Great Seducer hopes there will be an area of weakness that he can exploit in you, and when he finds it in your thoughts, his focused attack begins.”*

I listened and asked my King to show me how to keep the influence of the Seducer from getting a toe hold into my life. I never knew how deep the hole I had dug for myself was until I tried to claw my way out of the quicksand that held onto me. It was a battle for doing right, when in fact I had a deep desire to do wrong. But I was not alone in my struggle. He gave me encouragers within my *Journey Group* who lifted me up and strengthened my desire, while He served as a Heavenly Coach who wouldn’t give up on me. As long as I continued to make an effort, my Coach urged me on by showing me how to fight with resolve, and take steps that would lead out of the pit. However, when I slacked off, He did not push me. I could tell that He was teaching me something about the necessity of my choices and efforts, if I expected Him to continue coaching me. However, the efforts I made were gallant, but somehow they were not enough. As soon as I would make some progress and then try to rest just for a little while after my success, like being pulled by gravity, I would begin to sink again into the hole I had just worked so hard to escape. *“What is this??”* I exclaimed. *“Can this not be beaten? Lord, will You not help me win this battle?”*

Then I heard His voice: *“If you want to leave the pit you are in, you will have to commit all the way to make it out.”*

I responded, *“Lord, what else must I do? I have seen Your hand extended to me while in the pit of destruction. I reached out and took it. I have been redeemed. I am Yours. I want to live for You, and I want to know You better. I do not want to remain in the pit. But as soon as I make progress out of it, something takes hold of me, and I find myself sinking back into the place I struggle to leave. What else must I do to make this evil grip release me?”*

The Lord answered, *“Look at how you are being gripped to evil. As soon as that grip is released, you will be able to leave the pit you are in.”*

Slowly I began to look for the grip that God said kept me tied to evil. I asked, *“Where is that evil hand?”* I looked at the people in my life and could not find it there. I looked at the circumstances in my life around church, family, work and so on, but I couldn’t find the hand that held me to evil there. Finally, I looked

within my own life, and sure enough, there was a hand holding onto evil thoughts and evil images that bombarded my mind. But it wasn't a hand reaching up from hell holding onto me. It was a hand reaching down from me holding onto the evil. I was surprised to see that it wasn't someone or something else's hand. It was my own hand that kept me connected to evil.

By keeping a grasp on evil with my sinful thoughts, it kept me from fully escaping the pit that Jesus had given His life to save me from. With this revelation, I exclaimed to the Lord, *"I have found it! I found the hand that kept me in the grip of evil, and it is my own. What do I need to do now Lord?"*

The Lord answered, *"My child, I reached down with My hand of grace to pull you out of the pit you've lived in all of your life. You reached back to Me with a hand of faith, and gripped My hand. You were saved at that moment. But the reason you continue to struggle with getting completely away from the pit's influence, is because you have kept your other hand gripped on those things that seduce you. You must let go of your grip of the memories of your days in the pit, for you no longer live there. Now that you know the problem, what will you do about it?"*

"Savior," I answered. *"It seems clear to me that I need to let go of one grip and fully grasp You with both of my hands. Therefore, today I let go of those thoughts and temptations that keep me holding onto the ways of the pit, and I commit my heart and mind totally to you. I realize now that I had failed to do this. I now see clearly the escape route You have given to me, and I gladly take it."*

Guys, if this man is you, what are you going to do about it? You do not have to remain in a place in your mind that is bound to lead you astray. You can get out of this hole. But it starts with making your thoughts, as well your will, obedient to Christ. Are you ready to get out? I think Will Rogers had it right when he said:

*"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging."*