



“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:16).

When the Tempter Comes

Central Truth: Like Jesus, believers can defend themselves against temptation with the Word of God.

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Topic: Satan: Temptations of; Temptation.

The term tempt is used in two different ways in the Bible. (1) It means to put to the test as when “*God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him. . . . Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of*” (Genesis 22:1, 2). God did not intend for Abraham to kill Isaac. He was testing Abraham's faith and obedience.

(2) It means to entice to evil. James wrote, “*Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin*” (James 1:14, 15).

We are tempted today in the areas of both testing and enticing. Jesus was tempted in both ways. God tests, and the devil entices. Settle in the beginning of this study that God is not involved in enticement. “*God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*” (James 1:13). Only the devil will try to lead you into sin.

This study is designed to prepare you to gain the victory “When the Tempter Comes.”

I. THE TEMPTER IS ACTIVE TODAY

A. The devil tempts us all to sin. The apostle Paul wrote, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man*” (I Corinthians 10:

13). Notice that statement, "*common to man.*" It means that every temptation you have is experienced by other people also. They have borne it; so can you.

It is no sin to be tempted. The devil tempts the worst of us and the best of us. If you were as sinless and sufficient as Jesus Christ, you would still be tempted to evil.

The record of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is recorded twice in the Bible (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Many other references are made to His temptations. Hebrews 2:18 says that He "*suffered being tempted,*" indicating that His temptations were real. Hebrews 4:15 says that He was "*in all points tempted like as we are.*" Jesus complimented His disciples, "*Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations*" (Luke 22:28), indicating that He experienced repeated temptations throughout His ministry. Since Jesus was tempted of the devil, you are in good company when you are tempted.

B. The devil tempts us because he is our enemy. He is the wicked one who exercises his dominion over the world (I John 5:19). He is "*the god of this world*" who opposes the gospel and hinders the saints (II Corinthians 4:4). He hates whatever is good and causes the world (the unregenerate society) to hate God's people (John 15:18, 19). The devil is as fierce as a roaring lion; he is seeking to destroy us (I Peter 5:8). Never trifle with temptation. It is deadly and dangerous. Flee from it as you would from a poisonous serpent.

II. THE TEMPTER ENTICES IN MANY WAYS

The areas of the devil's appeal to sin are stated as "*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*" (I John 2: 16). Those were the three areas in which Eve was tempted (Genesis 3:6) and in which Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). You will experience the same.

A. The tempter calls for the satisfaction of physical desires. Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights. During that time His appetite had ceased to demand food, but at the end of the period His appetite awakened and hunger returned. Jesus' thoughts turned to food, and the devil took advantage of His natural hunger. "*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*" (Matthew 4:3).

Notice the subtle challenge in that statement: "If indeed You really are the Son of God. . . ." Jesus was challenged to prove that He was God's Son, to take the preservation of His life in His own hands, to turn His ministry into a bread crusade to enlist the support of the people. But He refused. He

would not do even a good thing when the tempter was behind it.

B. The tempter calls for a display which genders pride. Taking Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, the devil challenged Him, "*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.*" Then he even quoted (misquoted) Scripture to entice Jesus the more (Matthew 4:5-9). Suppose Jesus had done so. If He had dropped 450 feet from the pinnacle to the Kidron Valley, without injury, people would have thought Him a great man of God. God had said, "*The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple*" (Malachi 3:1). What better way could He have done it?

Jesus refused to do it because faith must be based on fact, not on spectacular display. Jesus refused to perform miracles to impress people (Luke 23:8, 9), but He performed them to relieve human need (Mark 8:25, 26; Luke 8:56). Is there a lesson for us here?

C. The tempter calls for a compromise of one's principles. The devil offered Jesus "*all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*" upon the condition that Jesus would "*fall down and worship*" him (Matthew 4:8, 9). Beware of the temptation to come to terms with the world, to lower your standards, or to compromise. That will gather a crowd, but it will not promote the kingdom of God. Jesus knew that and refused to yield His high standards. What is the Christian to do today when faced with the same temptation? He must do nothing less than obey fully the commands of God.

III. THE TEMPTER CAN BE RESISTED

A. Resist the devil by submission to God. Jesus had manifest His surrender to the will and purpose of God when He received water baptism (Matthew 3:13-15). His burial in water and raising from the water pictured His willingness to go even to death (knowing assuredly of the Resurrection to follow) in order to do the will of God.

Jesus' submission to God sets the example for us. James 4:7 reads, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" Notice that submission must come before resistance. Resisting is useless without the prior submitting, for we would be dealing with the devil in our own strength. Only by surrender to God can we be "*strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*" (Ephesians 6:10).

B. Resist the devil by using the Word of God. Each of the three temptations in the wilderness was met with Jesus' reply, "*It is written . . .*" (Matthew 4:4, 6, 7, 10). That indicates that Jesus was quoting Scripture, each quotation being from the book of Deuteronomy.

Christians resist the devil today by taking up "*the sword of the Spirit,*

which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). But one cannot use that *"sword of the Spirit"* unless he knows the Bible. Read the Word; meditate on it; memorize portions of it. Stand against the devil by quoting the Word of God.

C. Resist the devil by the power of God. Jesus was victorious in His wilderness temptation. He had been anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), led by the Spirit to that place (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1), and was empowered by the Spirit for that experience (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38). No wonder He resisted the devil.

We, too, need the power of God in times of temptation. *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). How can we stand against such powers in our human strength? We cannot, but God is faithful to make a way for us to escape (I Corinthians 10:13). *"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations"* (II Peter 2:9). And He will as we are *"strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"* (Ephesians 6:10).

IV. THE TEMPTER CAN BE OVERCOME

God promises to enable us to resist the devil. That is good. Furthermore, He promises to give us victory over the devil. That is even better. Our question is, "How can the tempter be overcome?"

A. The devil can be overcome through Jesus Christ. He promised, *"I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy"* (Luke 10:19). With power *"over all the power of the enemy,"* victory is ours! *"The weapons of our warfare are . . . mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"* (II Corinthians 10:4). The Christian faces the devil's forces with this assurance: *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (I John 4:4). Let no Christian think that he cannot overcome the devil. Jesus guarantees it.

B. The devil can be overcome through a struggle. Never think that victory comes automatically. Jesus suffered through His temptations (Hebrews 2:18). So will we as we *"resist the devil"* (James 4:7). We are in a spiritual warfare which necessitates our wearing *"the whole armour of God, that (we) may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11). When the Bible speaks of the devil's attempt to destroy us, it follows with the admonition, *"Whom resist steadfast in the faith"* (I Peter 5:9). Resisting the devil is like racing against a swift opponent, wrestling with a strong foe, or fighting an armed and fierce warrior.

You will have a battle with the devil, but you can overcome him. Know in advance of the victory that Jesus has provided. Stand firm in times of temptation.

C. The devil can be overcome completely. Our victory is neither partial nor temporary; it is total! Claim this promise: *"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly"* (Romans 16:20). That is the fulfillment of a promise God made in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). You will see it fulfilled as the devil is crushed under your feet.

Jesus came that He might *"destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14). One day the wicked one will be revealed, *"whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming"* (II Thessalonians 2:8). *"The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever"* (Revelation 20:10). That is ultimate victory over evil!

D. The devil can be overcome personally. He can be defeated in your life, while you live in this world, before Jesus returns.

Revelation 2 and 3 records seven letters Jesus gave for seven churches in Asia. He spoke to the whole church in each of the letters, until He came to a promise at the end. Suddenly He spoke to persons, saying, *"He that overcometh . . ."* Great rewards are promised to each person who overcomes. That can be you!

Take a few moments to reflect on what you have studied on this subject. Remember that it is no sin to be tempted, but it is a sin to yield. You can have victory each day because all you need for successful resistance and full victory is already provided for you in Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:3). Claim the victory by faith and live for God.

Questions

1. In what sense is tempt a bad word in the Bible?
2. How does James 1:13-15 describe the process of temptation and sin?
3. What does Hebrews 2:18 say about the temptations of Jesus?
4. What is the origin of all temptation to sin?
5. In what three areas did the devil tempt Jesus?
6. How are you tempted in those same ways?
7. How can you resist the devil when he tempts you to sin?
8. What assurance do you find in I John 4:4?
9. What rewards does God promise to one who overcomes?
10. What part of this study is most helpful to you?