

Overcoming Temptation

TEXT: Mk. 14:38, “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak.”

THESIS: To help Christians overcome temptations.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Temptation is a part of every Christian’s daily life.
 - a. And, as unpleasant as temptations can be, they are necessary.
 - b. For, where there is no temptation, there is no virtue in doing good.
 - c. And, there has never been a man so good that he was exempt from trials and temptations.
 - i. Even Jesus was tempted.
 - d. So, since all of us must face temptation, we must learn how to overcome it.
2. You know, a man was sitting next to a woman on a plane. And, after the meal was served, she received chocolate pie for dessert. Now, the lady took the salt shaker and sprinkled salt all over her chocolate pie. Shocked as the man was, he said, Lady, salt won’t help that pie. She answered, No, but it will help me. It will keep me from eating it.
 - a. Have you ever tried to deal with temptation in this way?
 - b. She made something appealing to her unattractive, so she would not be tempted to eat it.
3. Satan does just the opposite.
 - a. He makes temptation attractive.
 - b. He sugarcoats and gift wraps every sin.
 - c. Sin is pleasurable.
 - i. Look at Heb. 11:25, “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;”
 - ii. There is a degree of pleasure or excitement in sin that amuses us or that we enjoy.
 - iii. However, what we may not realize is that pleasures are not happiness.
 - iv. Sure, sin brings pleasure for a while but, sin is deceitful (Heb. 3:13) and it is short lived.
 - d. Now, Satan realizes that all people cannot be tempted in the same way.
 - i. So, just like a skilled fisherman, he makes a lure appropriate for each individual.
 - ii. Notice Jam. 1:14, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”
 - (1) A person sees, smells, tastes, hears, touches, or thinks about something—something that is forbidden and harmful—and he fails to turn away and flee from it.
 - (2) It may be something as simple as hearing or listening to suggestive music, music about the intimacy of a relationship.

- (3) Instead of fleeing, the person allows his mind to conceive the thing.
 - (4) He pictures the pleasure and begins to desire or lust after it.
- 4. Temptation has always been present.
 - a. It started in the Garden of Eden, but today, it seems temptations have increased in our society.
 - b. More and more people are affected by evil through the influence of movies, internet, magazines, videos, and suggestive songs.
 - c. The single most influential segment of the mass media is television.
 - i. The average family watches four hours of TV a day.
 - ii. TV has been called “America’s Babysitter” for the “Latch Key Kids” whose mothers and fathers both work outside the home.
 - d. Also, the computer has emerged as the second most time consuming diversion with the average American spending two hours daily on it and that number is increasing.
- 5. Now, answer this: would you allow someone to come into your home and teach your children that drinking, profanity, premarital or extramarital sex, and in some cases, taking drugs is alright?
 - a. Would you allow this same person to blaspheme God and Jesus Christ, to make fun of religion, to portray all Christians as insane fanatics or mental incompetents, and to make it appear that religion is responsible for most of the world’s ills?
 - i. Of course not.
 - ii. Yet, this is exactly what most of us are doing by not limiting and controlling the television programming and internet access we allow in our homes.
 - iii. As Christian parents, we must assume our God given responsibility to our children.
 - (1) Eph. 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
- 6. You see, no one is immune to these evil influences.
 - a. One of our brethren recently wrote that we are seeing a marked increase in sexual immorality even among preachers and elders in the church.
 - b. We have all seen public evidence of men claiming to be “men of God,” but yielding to sexual temptation and bringing grief to millions of their followers.
 - c. This is a stark reminder that people from all walks of life must learn to deal with temptation.
- 7. Now, how do we overcome temptation is what I want to talk about?

DISCUSSION:

I. RECOGNIZE TEMPTATION FOR WHAT IT IS

- A. The first thing we must do is to realize that temptation in and of itself is not sin.
 - 1. Jesus was tempted and yet without sin.
 - a. In fact, look at Heb. 4:15, “For we have not an high priest which

cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.”

- b. There is not one thing that we are tempted with that Jesus was not tempted in.
2. Not until we yield to temptation does it become sin.
 - a. Many good and honorable men have evil thoughts that sometimes cross their minds.
 - b. Vile, selfish, lustful, unexplainable thoughts pop into their consciousness unexpectedly and at the most surprising moments.
 - c. These thoughts are Satan’s lures.
 - d. They do not become sin unless the person entertains them, plays with them, feeds them with the imagination, and encourages them.
 - e. Look at James 1:15 says, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
- B. Many good, sincere people have become discouraged after their conversion because they continue to be tempted.
1. Some claim to feel the pull of temptation even more after being converted.
 2. And, that certainly seems true enough because Satan attacks us at our strengths.
 - a. Satan knows that he once had him, but then after obeying Christ, Satan lost him.
 - b. Therefore, he tries every trick to get that individual back.
 - c. This is a simple answer, but it is a Biblical one.
 - (1) 1 Pet. 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”
 3. Temptation, instead of being an indication of wrong doing, is most often an indication that you are living right.
- C. Just remember, no person, not even a Christian, is immune to temptation.
1. But remember also, that temptation is not sin.
 2. It is only sin when we give into it.

II. TEMPTATION CAN BE OVERCOME (1 Cor. 10:13)

- A. In this passage, Paul supplies us with a Biblical description of temptation.
1. He shows us the result of yielding to temptation, gives us a warning against overconfidence, and tells us about a beautiful promise from God on how to deal with temptation in our personal life.
 2. This verse is one of the greatest in the Bible.
 - a. It is one of those you should commit to memory.
 - b. Here is what Paul suggest we do about temptation.
- B. First, temptation can be overcome if we realize that we are not the only ones who are tempted.

1. Notice he says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as common to man."
 - a. This is a straightforward warning that is usually neglected and ignored.
 - b. Who in here has ever gotten to the point in your life that you felt you were the only one who had experienced what you were going through?
 - c. Well, we may feel this way, but it is simply not true.
 - d. There is nothing that you are dealing with that others have not been confronted with before you.
 2. When you are struggling with temptation of evil thoughts, feelings of hatred towards someone, sexual passion, intellectual doubt about your faith or attempting to rid yourself of Christianity altogether, you are not the only one to think this way.
 - a. It does not matter if your trials are about living alone being a widow or widower, having problems with your job, or discovering that a loved one has a terminal illness, and you feel like screaming, "Why, God?"
 - b. Believe me, you are not alone here either.
 3. Thousands of others have walked these roads before you and I and that is because there is a commonness to our temptations.
 - a. It is no great mystery that Satan would like for us to think that we are unique and that if he can isolate us from our brothers and sisters in Christ who are going through similar problems, he can discourage you, defeat you, and finally destroy you.
 - b. But, if you study church history, you will find that every single saint has had deep struggles with temptation.
 - c. In fact, even Jesus identifies with us in these temptations.
 - (1) Let's read: Matt. 4:1-10
 - (2) Heb. 4:15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin."
- C. Second, temptations can be overcome if we remember God's promise to aid us in the time of temptation.
1. Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."
 - a. Peter writes in 2 Pet. 2:9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:"
 2. Each one of us has our breaking point, our point of vulnerability.
 - a. These points change as we move through life such as the difference of temptations between a teen and those much older or the ease of struggles with sins of the flesh into temptations of the spirit or in

- old age, it is replaced with resentment for goals never achieved.
- b. What is your problem?
 - (1) You may not struggle with sexual passion, but you may be fighting against jealousy, power, money, drink, or distrust people.
 - (2) Satan also knows your weakest point.
 - c. Jesus faced the same tempter.
 - (1) Matt. 4:1, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”
 - (2) The same avenues of temptation were used against Him that are used against us; lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16).
 - d. Satan came to Jesus when he was at His lowest point.
 - (1) He had fasted for forty days in the loneliness and solitude of the wilderness.
 - (2) He would have been at a low point physically and emotionally.
 - (3) But, what did he say: “It is written, it is written, it is written.”
 - (4) Likewise, we should always be on our guard for Satan’s assaults.
3. Isn’t it comforting to know that God also knows our vulnerable point?
- a. He will not allow us to be tempted above our capacity to resist
 - b. God is faithful: He limits the temptation.
 - c. He does not allow a temptation to confront a believer that is:
 - (1) Too enticing.
 - (2) Too forceful.
 - (3) Too pleasing.
 - (4) Too ego-boosting.
 - (5) Too attractive.
 - (6) Too fulfilling.
 - (7) Too appealing.
 - (8) Too satisfying.
 - (9) Too self-exalting.
 - (10) Too stimulating.
 - (11) Too promising.
 - (12) Too arousing.
 - d. God knows what we can bear and how much we can bear; therefore, He limits every single temptation within our limits to overcome it.
 - e. God is faithful and there are many stories where this truth has been proven.
 - (1) Severe trials have been balanced with blessings.

- (2) Terrible financial reversals are coupled with good health and wonderful family relations.
 - (3) Bad health and family problems have been coupled with good financial security and supportive friends.
 - (4) Physical torture in a prisoner of war camp led one to Christ and helped him learn how to have the “peace . . . which passeth all understanding.” (Phil. 4:7).
- f. God knows how much we can stand, and He will not leave us helpless.
- D. Third, temptation can be overcome when we remember that God “will with the temptation also make a way to escape.”
1. From the very beginning of our temptation, God has fashioned a way of escape . . . an escape route.
 2. He always gives us the strength and energy to walk through or over the temptation by:
 - a. Fleeing.
 - (1) 2 Tim. 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
 - b. It may require us to stand and fight.
 - (1) Jam. 4:7, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
 - c. It always requires us to pray and ask God for help.
 - (1) Matt. 6:13, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”
 - (a) You know, temptation’s pull is so strong and mankind seeks their own way, which when Satan paints such a beautiful picture, if we leave us to ourselves, we will fall.
 - (b) But, prayer to God keeps us from the awful pull of temptation.
 - (2) Matt. 26:41, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”
 3. Another way is to live in constant awareness of our vulnerability and weaknesses.
 - a. We need to learn from our former failures, and know that if we do not strengthen ourselves, we can fail again.
 - b. Also, we need to remind ourselves of the punishment which sin brings into our lives, and the pain and sorrow we experienced when we yield temptation.
 - c. Look at Jam. 4:7-8, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist

the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.”

- (1) We must put ourselves under God, under His care, power and strength.
- (2) We must take a stand against the devil and to keep our mind and energy focused upon counteracting and conquering the temptation.
- (3) Because we can never defeat Satan:
 - (a) By standing and fighting alone.
 - (b) By going our own way.
 - (c) By giving in a little.
 - (d) By refusing to listen to God’s Word.

III. NOW THERE ARE SOME INGREDIENTS THAT WILL INSURE OUR VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

A. Have faith in God.

1. We know Satan’s power.
 - a. We have felt it often.
 - b. If we rely only on ourselves, all hope is lost and we will surrender.
 - c. We serve a great and powerful God whose power is ours to claim if we will.
 - (1) 1 Jn. 5:4, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.”
 - d. Paul tells us that nothing is more dangerous than a false sense of security.
 - (1) 1 Cor. 10:12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”
2. Some seem to feel they must prove themselves by wrestling with every temptation.
 - a. This is foolish.
 - b. The Bible warns us against such actions.
 - (1) 2 Tim. 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”
 - (2) 1 Cor. 10:14, “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”
 - (3) 1 Thess. 5:22, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”
 - (a) Avoid it, stay away from the bounds of evil and do not let another even come close to it. Be ye holy for God is holy.
 - c. A wise person will follow these instructions.

- B. Determine to be pure.
1. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.
 - a. Dan. 1:8, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”
 2. It should be the goal of every Christian to keep thyself pure (1 Tim. 5:22).
 3. A Christian who determines in his heart to fight temptation will overcome it.
 4. How can I ask God to deliver me from temptation if I have not honestly done my best to avoid it?
- C. We can ensure victory over temptation by storing up God’s word in your heart.
1. Psa. 119:11, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
 2. We can use the same weapon Jesus did to overcome Satan.
 - a. Eph. 6:17, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”
 - b. Repeatedly, Jesus said, “It is written . . .” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).
 - c. These words are the most powerful deterrent to sin that the world has ever seen.
- D. We can ensure victory over temptation knowing that, if you fall, don’t think that all is lost.
1. There is forgiveness for the penitent heart.
 2. Read 1 Jn. 1:7-10, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
 3. Christ interceded for Peter when he fell.
 - a. Lk. 22:32, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”
 4. He is in heaven now, making intercession for us.
 - a. Heb. 7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”
 5. God is ready to forgive us when we ask Him for forgiveness.
 - a. Matt. 3:8, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:”
 6. You know, we ought to thank God that He does not demand sinless perfection of us.
 - a. He only asks us to be faithful.
 - b. Not one of can be perfect, but all of us can be faithful.

IV. WHAT WE CAN LEARN

- A. Christians are to be lights to the world.
1. We are to be in the world, but not of the world.
 2. It is good when Christians are in the world, but it is not good when too much of the world is in the Christian.
 3. Worldliness is too much of the world in us.
 4. We must recognize that we are enemies of the world and that we must not love the world.
 - a. Jam. 4:4, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”
 - b. 1 Jn. 2:12-15, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
 - (1) A person is not to love this world, the possessions and pleasures of this world; he is to love God.
 - (2) Of course, he is to appreciate and enjoy the beauty and the good things of both the earth and the heavens.
 - (3) But he is not to become more attached to this world than he is to God and heaven.
 - (4) The believer's eyes are to be focused upon God, and he is to be attached to God, loving God before all else.
- B. Paul admonished Christians.
1. 1 Cor. 10:12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”
 2. We do not want to fall from grace, but we still need to remember that this is a real possibility.
 - a. For in Gal. 5:4, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”
 - b. We can fall, but it is possible to keep from falling.
 - (1) 2 Pet. 2:10, “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

- C. You know, someone once said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”
1. We need to know the enemy.
 2. It is imperative that we understand the nature of temptation.
 3. It is essential that we know ourselves, be aware of our weaknesses, and realistically evaluate our strengths.
 4. If we fail to guard our frailties, Satan will take advantage of us.
 - a. 2 Cor. 2:11, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”
- D. And, it is important to remember three points that Paul made to the Corinthian Christians about dealing with temptation.
1. First, it is comforting to know that we are not alone in our struggle.
 - a. Others have been there before us, and they have overcome.
 - b. We can, too.
 - c. Jesus was, “in all points tempted like we are . . .” (Heb. 4:15).
 - d. Therefore, He knows how to comfort those who are tempted.
 2. Second, God will aid us in our struggle.
 - a. He will not put more on us than we can bear.
 3. Third, there is always a way of escape if we choose to take it.
- E. Now, another lesson we can learn is to remember the elements that ensure success in overcoming temptation.
1. Faith in God and His power will keep us from a lack of confidence.
 2. Determination to keep ourselves pure will insure that we do not deliberately yield to temptation.
 3. Storing up God’s word in one’s heart will provide a defense against Satan’s fiery darts.
 4. The sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon we have.
 - a. When it is used, Satan is routed.
 5. We need to remind ourselves that failure is not final or fatal.
 - a. Peter fell, but he came back.
 - b. The prodigal left home an angry young man, but he came home a wiser man.
 - (1) He was received with open arms.
 - c. If you fall, get up, dust yourself off, and get back into the race.
 - (1) There is no prize for those who quit.
- F. In some of the Olympic games of the past, Tom Courtney represented the United States in the 26 mile marathon. He ran well in the beginning, and led the pack up to the 25 mile marker. Then something happened. Tom Courtney fell just 50 feet from the finish line. He got up and tried to run again, but his aching body simply would not obey his brain’s instructions. He tried three times to get to his feet, but each time he fell. Finally, he began to crawl towards the finish line. At the last moment, with the victory tape a few inches away, he managed to struggle to his feet and began to force one foot in from of another, until he literally fell across the tape and won the victory.

1. When the film of the race was viewed, one could see Tom Courteny's lips moving.
2. He was saying, "I want to win!"
3. He did!
4. And, we can too!

CONCLUSION:

1. How much do you want to win the Christian race?
 - a. How much do you desire heaven?
 - b. If you are serious, you must develop a "hunger and thirst for righteousness."
2. The way we run the race here on earth will determine how we cross the finish line—either in victory or defeat.
 - a. The choice is ours.