

God’s Desire for His Children

Most of us, as Christians, tire from our efforts in battling temptation. But God, the Father wants His children to know, “*So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Spirit. Then you won’t be doing what the sinful natures craves.*” Galatians 5:16 NLT The desires of man’s sinful nature will produce evil results: “*sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties and other kinds of sin.*” Galatians 5:19-21 NLT The same passage further states the very sobering truth that “*Anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

In the face of such a list as this is there any hope for us as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to embrace “*for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’*” 1 Peter 1:15 NIV We are encouraged with the promise in Hebrews 2:18 that because Jesus suffered He is able to help us.

Overcoming Temptations

In the wilderness temptations (recorded in Matthew 4:1-11 and in Luke 4:1-13) Jesus demonstrated the pattern for overcoming the temptations put in our paths by our adversary, Satan. Studying the temptations Jesus encountered provides an example whereby we can **examine the temptations** that come to us, **identify the root**, and **show us how to gain the victory** over them. We can identify in which areas we are being attacked and that will help us to know where the specific battle is; otherwise we may feel like we are shadow boxing with Satan.

Jesus’ Wilderness Experience

John, the Baptist had just baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. As Jesus came up out of the water the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon Him and a voice from heaven declared Him to be God’s Son, whom He loves and with whom He is well pleased. (Matthew 3:16)

“*Than Jesus was led by the spirit in the desert to be tempted by the devil.*” Matthew 4:1 NIV

The First Temptation and Its Pattern

In the Garden of Eden, Eve yielded to the lust of the flesh as she saw the forbidden fruit, desired it, and ate it, giving Satan an inroad into the lives of the generations of men and women to follow. Satan appealed to her pride and desire for power when he told her she would be like God. (Genesis 3:1-6) Jesus modeled the way to stand against temptations as He faced the same enemy who lured Eve, and then Adam, to sin.

The temptation to sin is placed within our thoughts. It may start with something we see with our eyes or hear with our ears. It may be a thought that springs up from old wounds we have endured. We also need to be very aware that one of Satan’s main attacks on Christians is to try to get them to doubt the character of their Father, God. We see this clearly as Satan planted doubts in the mind of the first woman Eve. Satan tries to appeal to our independent, rebellious nature, which is often so covered up within us that we don’t know it is lying dormant waiting to spring into action. Scripture tells us “*the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world.*” 1 John 2:16 NIV

The temptations occurred at the end of His 40 day fast.

Temptation	Sin	Examples	Root Cause	Jesus Answer
1.) Turn stones to loaves of bread	Lust of flesh	Desire for what is prohibited Self Indulgence Appetites Natural Sex Food (May be tempted to satisfy a perfectly normal desire in a wrong way at the wrong time.) Unnatural Smoking Alcohol Addictive drugs	Inordinate desire to have senses gratified	“ <i>It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone but every word that comes from the mouth of God’.</i> ” (Matthew 4:4 NIV) Jesus was quoting Duet. 8:3 which was referring to the hunger of the children of Israel in the wilderness
2.) If you are the son of God throw yourself down	Pride of Life	Ministry gifts Possessions Friends Looks Accomplishments of self/offspring Job Power Boasting Self-exaltation Inordinate ambitions High places of position are especially dangerous	Depending on our own power, resources, and the stability of earthly things	“ <i>It is also written ‘do not put the Lord your God to the test’.</i> ” (Matthew 4:7 NIV) Jesus was quoting Duet. 6:16
3.) Bow down and worship Satan	Lust of the Eye	Power Position	Greedy longings of the mind	“ <i>Away from me, Satan! For it is written ‘worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’.</i> ” (Matthew 4:10 NIV) Jesus was quoting Duet. 6:13

Difference in Thought and Sin

A key point to understand and remember is that **the undesirable thought coming into our minds is not sin. The sin is in yielding** to the ungodly thought and not casting it out immediately. Many Christians live defeated lives because they don't understand this. Bad thoughts flash across their minds and they don't **examine the thought, recognize the source and take the thought captive** by refusing it according to II Corinthians 10:4-5. Sin is only present if we allow the thought to stay, we wrap our minds around it, and allow ourselves to be snared by it. We follow Jesus pattern and speak the appropriate scripture aloud to our adversary.

Common Areas of Challenge

One area where Satan is busy at work is in dividing Christian brothers and sisters as well as sowing discord with non-Christians. We are all in varying degrees of spiritual growth and immaturity, hopefully moving on towards maturity in Christ. We need to extend grace to each other and refuse to be offended. *"Great peace have they who love your law, nothing shall offend them or make them stumble."* Psalms 119:165 Amplified Pride in our own knowledge and "spiritual superiority" often provide an entrance for offense taking root. If we are to walk in victory we must learn to examine ourselves as these situations arise.

Worry is a constant challenge for many Christians as we pray over situations but continue to hold on to them, not really releasing them to God and trusting Him to work them out. Thanks be to God we are not left hopeless in the face of our temptations. We follow James 4:7,8a NIV *"Submit yourselves then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you."*

Important Points to Remember

1. Guard our eyes and ears and pray for discernment and protection over them, knowing that we have a responsibility to what we allow them to be exposed. Proverbs 4:23
2. Examine our thoughts and take ungodly ones captive. 11 Corinthians 10:4-5
3. Let offenses find no lodging place in our spirits. *"Don't be conceited or jealous of each other or irritate each other."* Galatians 5:26 NLT
4. Follow Jesus' example and use the only offensive weapon, the sword of the Spirit, in the armour provided for the Christian. Ephesians 6:17b Jesus modeled the pattern for speaking scripture to Satan as he said, *"It is written."* We are to know and use the scripture that applies to our temptations. Satan cannot read our minds and he is not impressed with fancy "spiritual language" and threats. Satan is defeated with the **spoken aloud Word of God.**
5. Know individual weakness and be on guard (Phillipians 4:7b)
6. Draw on the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells all who have experienced the new birth. (Galatians 5:16)

Walking in Victory

We can walk in the victory side of the scripture stated at the beginning of this writing *"but when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."* Galatians 5:22,23 NLT

We remember Jesus went to the cross to gain the victory over Satan and it is through Him we are led in *"triumphal procession."* II Corinthians 2:15 NIV. *"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."* II Corinthians 7:1 NIV

Doorways For Sin



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