

# HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION

CHRISTIANS need not be surprised when the enemy of their soul tries to discourage them or tempt them to do evil. So long as a person does not yield to the temptation, he has not committed sin. With the help of God, one can overcome every temptation of Satan.

God's Word pronounces a blessing upon the one who withstands temptation: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:12-15).

This Scripture which says, "Blessed [or happy] is the man that endureth temptation," indicates that man can endure. And the one who is saved and endures will receive a crown of life — he will live forever with the Lord in Glory! He has overcome sin and temptation.

## What Is Sin?

There is a difference between sin and temptation. Sin is the "transgression of the law" — a wilful transgression (I John 3:4). But the devil is sly and cunning in his way of tempting people. He tries to lure the Christian from God's holy and righteous way by putting doubts into his mind.

The devil will bring a discouraging or undesirable thought of some kind before a child of God; he will make a suggestion — run that thought through the Christian's mind — and then tell him that he has sinned, that if he were really saved he would not have such a thought. But the thought had not come from the heart of the Christian; it was merely a suggestion from Satan. The Bible says the devil is a liar, and the father of lies (John 8:44).

If you know that the father of lies is talking to you, don't listen to him. Instead, give thanks to the Lord for the Blood of Calvary that washed away your sins and ask Him to cover you afresh with His Blood. There is wonder-working power in the Blood. Satan cannot enter a heart that is covered with Jesus' Blood.

## The Lust of the Flesh

The Word says: "For 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.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:16, 17). The enemy of our soul will dangle before us something that is appealing to the carnal nature. But when the carnal nature has been removed (through sanctification), and we love the Lord above everything else, we are going to be very careful to guard that precious treasure the Lord gave us when He cleansed us from all sin.

We must be on our guard against temptation. Even prosperity can be a temptation. It is easy to strive for the things of this life until there is very little time left to serve the Lord. When one prospers in this life he may tend to put his trust in his riches or his own wisdom, rather than to lean hard upon the Lord in all things.

In the midst of prosperity we should be just as careful to invoke the blessing of God and His leadership and guidance as when we had to pray for our daily bread, a day at a time. We must not let the enemy tempt us away from the Lord through the many blessings that may come to us.

We have to set ourselves to please God. We must have a purpose that we will not allow ourselves to be corrupted by "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not

defile himself with a portion of the king's meat. The Psalmist said, "My heart is fixed." He meant that he was going to serve the Lord regardless of what would oppose him.

Job had that same determination; and if we, too, have that steadfastness of heart, nothing can shake us. The Lord will sustain us in time of trial and give us power to overcome.

## **Divine Commands**

The Scripture speaks of spiritual surgery: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matthew 18:8, 9).

That does not mean that we are to sharpen knife and cut off any of the members of our body. It means eliminating anything from our life that might lead us astray. If we see something that is evil, we are to look the other way before the desire for it creeps into our heart. Let us look to Jesus! The Psalmist said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD."

## **The Company We Keep**

In the Apostle Paul's discourse on the resurrection, he inserted, "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Corinthians 15:33). How did that verse get in there? It must have something to do with our being resurrected. If we are going to enjoy the blessings of eternal life and have a part in the resurrection, we must choose our path carefully in this life. We must be righteous and holy, examples "of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12).

We must be careful of our conversation, and also the companions we choose, for we know that evil communications — or evil companions — corrupt good manners or morals. It is easy to tell what kind of person one is by the things he talks about and the company he keeps. The Christian should choose people who are righteous and holy, those who are interested in the things of God, for his companions. They are the people who will uplift him and give him courage to go forward.

## **Cares of This Life**

In Luke 21:34 this warning is given:

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

It is evident there is temptation in our everyday routine. There are Christians who, for a time, go along their way rejoicing; then the cares of this life begin to creep in: business, family, even pleasure. They may be tempted to buy things they cannot afford, and go into debt until it seems there is no way out. Soon the load becomes so heavy their joy is gone.

Going into debt is a trick of the devil. The Bible says to "owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8). Some people strive to obtain all they can of things legitimate for their convenience and pleasure. They may live high in this life; but when they die, they can leave a debt their families are not able to pay. How much more blessed it is for us to live simply, obeying the Word of God! Then when the time comes for us to depart this life we can leave with a clean record, owing no man anything, and forever enjoy the blessings of Heaven.

## **The Accuser**

Satan is an accuser of the brethren. He even accuses them to God. And he has no scruples about lying. He likes to raise doubts in people's minds about others, cause division among friends, among the children of God. But God tells us how to behave toward one another: Love one another. Pray for one another. All troubles vanish quickly when we use that formula.

Through the words of John the Revelator, we are told of some of Satan's tactics, and how to overcome: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:10, 11).

What does the word "overcome" mean? It means, "to triumph over, to conquer, not be subjugated to, but to gain the victory over." There are some people in this world who say, "I am just a victim of my circumstances." But a Christian can be a victor over circumstances, through Jesus Christ his Lord.

We read in the above Scripture that those brethren overcame. How did they overcome? They overcame by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. We can do the same. If we give testimony, tell what the Lord has done for us, and fix our eyes on the Lord, Satan will flee.

### **Test Your Standing**

If you are being tempted and tried, ask yourself: "Have I sinned?" If you can truthfully answer, "No, I have been delivered from sin; I want nothing to do with sin; I want what God has for me," you are in a good spiritual condition. Test yourself every so often to see where your loyalties are. What are your desires, what do you think about, what do you read, what do you talk about, and with whom do you keep company? So long as you are walking in the light of God's Word, you are safe.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

The devil is vicious, and will "devour" you if he has a chance. Do not parley with him. You cannot outwit him in your own wisdom. Plead the Blood of Jesus to cover your soul, and resist the devil.

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (I Peter 5:9, 10).

That is abundant victory. The Christian can triumph gloriously over every power of the enemy. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Stand firm on the promises of God.

### **Jesus, Our Example**

Jesus was tempted, and for every temptation presented to Him, Jesus quoted the Scriptures. Satan knew Jesus was hungry, and tempted Him on that point. One of Satan's tactics is to tempt us on our weakest point. He asked Jesus to command the stones to be made bread; but Jesus answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

God's Word is our best defence. It is good to keep a Bible handy so we can find a promise when we need it — or a rebuke, if that is what we need. The Word will help us resist the devil, and will strengthen us and show us the will of God. In response to every suggestion Satan made to Jesus, He answered, "It is written. . . ."

Finally Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

It is easy to let things become idols — even legitimate things. Some people idolize their family. The best thing we can do for our family is to teach them the Word of God, lay that Word in their heart and set the example of Christian living before them. Then when temptations come to them, they have something firm on which to stand. Let us do all we can for our children, and trust the Lord to do the rest.

### **Strength to Overcome**

Sometimes we may seem to be facing insurmountable obstacles, but remember these promises of the Lord. He doesn't always remove the trial but He does give us grace to bear it, and to overcome.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Peter 2:9).

We read in I Corinthians 10:13:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Though God has not promised to lift the temptation, He has promised us a "way to escape," and that is to give us grace "to bear it," and in the end be a victor. Jesus knows the longing of every heart. He knows our pangs of disappointment and anxiety. He walked the way before us; and when in our deepest trial and temptation, if we will but look we shall see His footprints ahead of us, and if we follow in His footsteps they will lead us on to victory.

We need not be discouraged just because there is a devil. We should be encouraged because we have a Savior, the Lord who hears and answers prayer. If you are tempted, resist the devil. The Blood of Jesus has never lost its power. Remember, by the Blood we overcome.

Victory is sure to all who walk with Jesus. He is the Captain who has never lost a battle. Follow the Leader.