

Guard against
temptation expository
sermon notes religion
essay



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In a new beginning we always make resolutions to do better. Have you not resolve before the Lord to conduct your Christian life more well pleasing to Him?

Have you made a commitment before the Lord that you will not fall away, that you will keep away from sins, that you will not yield to temptations – not to be tempted to procrastinate, not to lust, not to be lazy, not to seek your own, not to indulge in the self, in the world, in sin, not to do that which you know you ought not to do, and to do that which you know you ought to do, not to be anxious.

Yes, these are very good moves and a good start for another year of closer walk with the Master. But we need to be aware that having made the commitment, we need also to guard against falling into temptation, because though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

And temptation strikes often times not when we are at our strongest, but our weakest moments. When we are at the limit of our patience for example, we are tempted to be unchristian. So we need to be aware. Remember the Lord Jesus' temptation began after 40 days of fasting.

Many people are usually more impressed when they see us act under pressure, eg your bosses, your envious colleagues, etc. But be ware, one weak act may spoil a whole lifetime of witness.

Temptations are common to every believer, yes, even mature Christians. The noblest souls are often the ones most tempted (eg Job, Joseph, David, Peter). It seems that Satan assaults Christian positions of leadership with his

strongest weapons. Therefore, we must all be on our constant spiritual guard.

But not just the leadership, but Satan stalks the path of every believer, offering all manner of enticements to lure the Christian away from an obedient and faithful walk with Christ.

No one is therefore exempt from Satan's attacks. Peter who had experienced being tempted, warned us in 1 Peter 5: 8 " Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

And the sad thing is that no one is completely successful in countering them, except the Lord Jesus Himself who " was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4: 15).

But let not this be an excuse for anyone of us to not to learn to resist temptations.

There may be some Christians who succumb to temptation so often that they see no hope for victory. They give up and give in without a struggle. This is an unfortunate condition.

Should a believer be in despair when he does fall into temptation? Let it not be so. The devil's trick is to blind the believer to the marvelous provision God has made for overcoming temptation. " The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand." (Psalms 37:

23-24)

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“ 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.” (1 John 1: 8-10)

But still, how do we fight against temptations?

The first thing the Christian must learn is that God does not lead him to sin. The Apostle James clearly condemns the attitude of blaming God for tempting circumstances [“ 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: 13-15)].

Well then, some may be thinking, what about the Lord’s prayer that says, “ Lead me not into temptation?” Does this mean that God does lead us into temptation?

Using the principle of biblical interpretation and Scripture interprets Scripture, this phrase, then, must have the sense of permitting.

That is we are to plead with the Lord, Do not suffer us, or permit us, to be tempted to sin. And when we pray in this manner, we are recognizing that God has such control over us and the tempter, as to save us from it if we call upon him.

Also the word temptation, can mean sometimes trial, affliction, anything that tests our virtue. If this be the application here, then the sense of the prayer is to plead with the Lord, “ Do not afflict or try us.”

But still God may test His children, because He uses it as a process designed to purify and strengthen them, but He does not lead them into sin.

God does not tempt a believer, though He may allow him to experience it – like how He allowed Job to be tempted by the devil. It is Satan who enticed the believer. God is always there who gives the grace and strength to tap for help to overcome.

And if a believer fails to depend upon God for help and falls into temptation, he has himself to blame.

It is he himself who has fallen into his own lust. For example in the case of David – instead of looking up to God, he looked at Bathsheba, enquired about her, took her, and laid with her.

Well, but let us not be harsh towards David, he is after all, a man after God’s own heart, more than all of us do. He blamed himself for the sin when Nathan rebuked him. He promptly admitted, “ I have sinned against the Lord.”

We have to blame ourselves, and not anybody else, neither the temptation nor the tempter, and definitely not God, if we are to be forgiven.

It is one sinful characteristic of fallen man to pass the blame to others (like Adam and Eve after their fall – we inherit this from them). We blame others,

we blame society, we blame the media, we blame the pressures in lives, all things else except we ourselves.

But if one is to be forgiven, he must firstly humbly admit, “ I have sinned,” like what David did. As long as one looks for someone or something else to blame, he will be totally helpless in combating temptation. He will never learn the lesson.

Well, David learned the hard way. If you want to be spared from learning the hard way, then follow the positive example of Joseph fleeing from Mrs Potiphar. He not to the woman much longer, rather he looked up to God for he said “ how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39: 9)].

Illustration: As we think of how Joseph escaped, we also think of one great church historian by the name of Augustine. He had great weakness when it comes to woman. But that was before his conversion. A testimony is told that some time after his conversion, Augustine came face to face with the woman who had dragged him deeper and deeper into the slavishness of sin and lust for many months until after he had been freed from the bondage of sin by the regenerating power of the cross. Now, being a new creation, Augustine would just pass her with only a formal nod. But the woman stopped him and said, “ Augustine, do you not know me any more? See, it is I.” Looking at her a moment, Augustine replied, “ But it is not I.” Indeed he had become a new creation in Christ Jesus, and that is the power to help us overcome temptation.

God does not lead us into temptation. He is always helping us that we might not succumb and sin against Him. And the way He helps us may be by strengthening us.

So realized that when you are faced with temptation, you may be being put under a test, not to sin against God, but that you may learn to depend upon the Lord for grace and strength to overcome, and come out of it a stronger and better Christian (eg, Job who says, “ But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” (Job 23: 10))

The second thing, the Christian needs to recognize the role of Scripture in overcoming temptation.

When God’s Word becomes an integral part of the believer’s life, it effectively functions to fortify that person against temptation’s power.

The gospel or Word of God is the power of God unto salvation or deliverance – even from all temptations.

Christ Himself demonstrated the Word’s power and utility when He submitted to Satan’s temptations. The Lord’s 40 day temptation in the wilderness dramatically instructs us how to overcome Satan’s attacks. In each temptation, Jesus answered the devil with Scripture. It does mean therefore the importance of believers to be well-acquainted with Holy Scriptures. The psalmist states, “ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” (Psalms 119: 11).

A systematic, prayerful study of Scripture is an absolute prerequisite to defeating temptation. As we study the word of God, we are also prepared not
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to take Satan lightly. The word warns us of Satan's methods [" Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Corinthians 2: 11)]. So we need to know our enemy in order to have a strong and effective defence – like the army has strategy to know the opposing forces, lest they be caught unprepared and be ambushed.

But the word does not only warn us of Satan's tricks, it also gives us how we should and empowers us against Satan's attacks (" Put on the whole armour of God, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6: 11)].

Dear brethren, please do not take the devil lightly. You cannot overcome him by your flesh. You need the written Word and the living Word as well.

Illustration: Martin Luther was often very graphic in his description of the activities of the devil. Once when he was asked how he overcame the devil, he replied, " Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks " Who lives here?" the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and say, " Martin Luther used to live here but he has moved out. Now I live here." The devil seeing the nail-prints in the hands, and the pierced side, takes flight immediately.

How do you overcome temptation and the tempter when they come knocking on the door of your heart? Is Jesus the new permanent resident who would answer the door on your behalf?

Thirdly, another essential to victory over temptation is to avoid temptation. On several occasions, Christ told His disciples to watch and pray that they

might not fall into temptation. [And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6: 13)]. This how we should pray, the Lord says, to ask the Lord not to allow us to be tempted to sin against Him. In Luke 22: 40, the Lord taught the disciples to pray that they enter or yield not into temptation.

Yes, it is correct that though when we are tempted but have not yielded to it, we have not sinned. But it is not right to want to enjoy the enticements of temptation without getting harmed. Is there anyone who takes it as a game, to see how much he can resist the tricks of the devil without falling into terrible sin?

Such an attitude is sinful in itself – spiritual pride, perhaps. For one thing, it fails to take seriously God's commands for positive holiness in attitude as well as action. Why play with fire? [Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2: 22); " Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." (Proverbs 4: 14-15)].

Now, of course, we all know that it is impossible to isolate ourselves from all life's temptations. The allurements of modern living are ever near. The man has to go to remote places for army training, and usually they will be time for worldly pleasures. Boys and girls nowadays get to mix around more easily and freely. The sales people are using the media with many various attractive ways to win customers – and these things are just right before our

eyes. We do go through such struggles. But we are not alone in this struggle, and God has not left us with no way of escape.

The Lord Himself was tempted like as we are, yet without sin. And also “ he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2: 18)

Regardless of the temptation, our Lord understands what we are facing and stands ready to provide the strength to resist and to emerge victorious.

One of the most crucial passages concerning temptations is 1 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.”

This verse is God’s guarantee that He will never allow Satan to go too far. The temptation’s intensity and the escape route will be uniquely tailored to the individual, and will not exceed his capacity.

Nevertheless, knowing there is a way of escape and using that way of escape may be quite a different. If ignorant of God’s Word, one likely will not recognize the escape when he sees it, for he will not know God works.

Just like in every building, there are escape routes when a fire does break out. And the management will have to get the people to familiarize themselves with the escape route by having fire drills.

Do we drill ourselves with the escape route in the Word of God? We need to know the word of God, we need to pray, we need to walk close with the Lord, if we want to be familiar with the ways of God how to resist, to avoid, to flee, to defend or to fight against temptations.

So have a plan in place for resisting temptation. To flee temptation, ask God in earnest prayer to help you stay away from people, places, and situations that may tempt you; memorise and meditate on portions of Scripture that combat you specific weaknesses; find another believer with whom you can openly share your struggles, and call this person for help when temptation strikes.

But back to the promise in 1 Cor 10: 13, whether or not one uses the escape route, the believer can never truthfully claim that the temptation was so strong that he had to succumb to it.

Another promise is that no one in this universe is uniquely tempted. While no two people are exactly alike, the temptations confronting each individual are basically the same as have confronted others.

And since no one is uniquely tempted, Christians can help from one another. We can therefore help one another, and seek help from one another. It is therefore so necessary for believers not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together.

When we are together often enough, we will be able to share our struggles and help one another to identify and overcome whatever weaknesses. For example, merely knowing that another Christian has overcome greed, for

instance, may be just the assurance that someone needs to make another attempt to overcome it in his own life.

The Christian who has grown and being strengthened when he has overcome some temptation is responsible for helping other Christians who have not grown in that area.

Above all the Lord Jesus is always there to help us. [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. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4: 15-16)]. He is a sympathetic Saviour, knowing from His own incarnate experience the pressure that temptation can exert.

Be always focus upon Him and you can be assured of not saying yes to temptation.

Illustration: A man said this is how he learned from his pet dog how to avoid temptation. He father used to put a bit of meat or biscuit on the floor near the dog and say, “ No!” and the dog knew he must not touch it. But he never looked at the meat. He seemed to feel that if he did so, the temptation to disobey would be too great, so he looked steadily at the master. Yes, the lesson for us all here is always look up to the Master’s face and you will not disobey to fall into temptation.

Conclusion.

So let ask God to make you a victor over all temptations that may come your way. Depend upon Him. He may be putting you through a test, and awaits to see you calling upon Him for help.

Depend upon the power and wisdom of the Word, rely upon God's grace, and you can therefore have victory, even over Satan's most subtle and compelling temptations.

Do not yield to temptation. Flee, avoid, enter not, keep away. Remember the devil is waiting whom he may devour.

Keep close with good Christian company. Shun evil companions. Help one another to overcome, be open and share you struggles. Above all ask the Saviour to help you, comfort, strengthen, and keep you. He is willing to aid you, and He will carry you through.

May God help us not to yield to temptation.