

OVERCOME TEMPTATION LIKE JESUS

Genesis 3: 1-7, John 8: 43-47, II Corinthians 11: 1-3 and James 1: 13-18

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The Apostle Paul tells us we overcome temptation in two passages that Pastor Larry did not read today. First, as the verse that inspired our title, “Overcome Temptation Like Jesus, Paul wrote, in Romans 12: 21, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” In I Cor. 10: 12-13, Paul added, “Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” This morning I want us to understand what temptation is so we can learn from the inside out, how to overcome it. What lessons do we need to learn so we can resist temptation and overcome it like Jesus always did? There are seven lessons I want us to look at from the one text in the epistle of James 1: 13-18. What are these seven lessons?

TEMPTATION IS WHAT MOVES US TO SIN. (I.) God is never moving us to sin. Turn in your Bibles to James 1: 13-15. “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown, brings forth death.” James tells us we are tempted not by God, but by our lusts. Paul tells us one of the lusts that tempt us is the desire to get rich. I Timothy 6: 9, 10, teaches us, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.” For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” John the apostle tells us about another kind of lust—a lust for desiring to be like the world. In I John 2: 15-17, he warns us, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” One more lust Satan uses to move us to sin is a cocky spirit that refuses to face the fact that each of us are vulnerable to sin. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10: 12, “Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall.” I hear people of all ages today, saying, “Don’t worry about me; I’m okay. I’ve got my life together. I’ll be fine. Worry about George or Jim or Barb or Sue, not me.” That is foolishness because temptation moves us all to sin.

Paul adds in Galatians 6: 1, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual/mature, should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” Don’t ever minimize the power of praying the Lord’s prayer. In Matthew 6: 13, the Lord’s prayer has a special request, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Peter knew what temptation was like. In II Peter 2: 9, he writes, Then the Lord

knows how to rescue the godly from trials/temptations, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.”

A recent survey of Navigator’s Discipleship Journal readers, these are Christians, ranked areas of their greatest spiritual challenge to them: 1. Materialism. 2. Pride. 3. Self-centeredness. 4. Laziness. 5. (Tie) Anger/Bitterness. 5. (Tie) Sexual lust. 7. Envy. 8. Gluttony. 9. Lying. The survey respondents noted temptations were more potent when they had neglected their devotional time with God (81 %) and when they were physically tired (57 %). Resisting temptation was accomplished by prayer (84 %), avoiding compromising situations (76 %), Bible study (66 %), and being accountable to someone (52 %). Overcoming temptation begins by knowing it is temptation, and remembering it is never God who tempts us to sin. Secondly,

TEMPTATION TO SIN HAS A STRONG PULL. (II.) From the notes of one old circuit riding preacher’s Bible, these words were written in a short but powerful message, in his notes on Genesis 3. He wrote about the fall of man. Regarding Eve, there were seven words he wrote: “Listened, was lured, lied, looked, lusted, lost.” Oh, the pull of sin! Just like a compass needle is affected by a magnetic attraction, so the Christian feels a pull from sin. On Wednesday night, we talked much about this. Remember the children of Israel on the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. They got tired of manna, Numbers 11: 5 tells us they complained saying, “We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic.” When Paul’s dear fellow worker Demas left him, what was the reason? There was a very strong pull. II Timothy 4: 10 tells us about that pull. We read, “For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me, and gone to Galatia.” The scriptures describe within us, competing natures, the old sinful nature, and the new nature of Christ. They are constantly at war, competing for supremacy. Each of us have to learn quickly how to confront this magnetic pull of our own sinful nature and of Satan’s wiles and deceptions. We read in Galatians 5: 17, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” Historian Shelby Foote told of a soldier who was wounded at the battle of Shiloh during the American Civil War. He was ordered to go to the rear. The fighting was fierce and within minutes he returned to his commanding officer. "Captain, give me a gun! This fight ain't got any rear!" Beloved, temptation is a fierce battle, and we need the full armor of God daily to overcome it. Thirdly,

TEMPTATION IS COMMON TO EVERY PERSON. (III.) This truth is found in I Corinthians 10: 13, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” Wrong desires we have that come into our heads are not new and different desires no one has faced before. Many other children, young people, and adults have faced the same temptations we have right now, hundreds and thousands of years before us. This third lesson is the key to all my counsel for the last 55 years of ministry. Francis Chan put on

quite a show in church one Sunday explaining temptation. He got out his fishing rod and put a gummy worm and dangled it in front of the church, right over the heads of people in the front row. No body grabbed for the gummy worm. So, he said, “That’s Satan for you. Don’t feel you have him beaten. He just changes the bait. Now Francis Chan hooked a \$100.00 bill above his people and now they looked at it carefully, hoping it would be theirs. Then Francis Chan said, “Satan is not just casting lures at us. He is bombarding us. He went over to the platform and picked up a coolie hat, a Chinese rice hat and it had bait dangling from it right before his eyes. His church laughed, but that’s how temptation is—it’s ever before us, common to every person. “Fourthly,

TEMPTATION ITSELF IS NOT SIN, ONLY YEILDING TO IT. (IV.)

Remember this text in James 1:14, 15. “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” Have we sinned yet at this point? No, not yet. But read on. “Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.” Sin happens not when we are tempted, only when we fall. God is not disappointed or displeased when we are tempted. To be strongly tempted does not mean we are guiltier than others who are being tempted, but it might well suggest that in the past, we have stood strong before. Never buy into the lie, “When I am spiritually mature, I will no longer be harassed by temptation.” That’s so false. We all must face temptation until we die. Even Jesus, was tempted in all points just like we are, but without sin, Hebrews 4: 15. Temptation gets its power by persuading us to believe that we will be happier if we follow it. The power of all temptation is the prospect that giving in, will make us happier.”

Don’t think yourself to be holy because you are not tempted in some area, like others, for the holiest believers on earth have the most temptations. The great John Wycliffe once said, “How much higher the hill is, so much is the wind there greater; how much higher the life is, so much the stronger is the temptation of the enemy.” Great Bible commentator F. B. Meyer, once said, “When we see a brother or sister in sin, there are two things we do not know: First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin. And second, we do not know the power of the forces that assailed him or her. We also do not know what we would have done in the same circumstances.” Fifthly,

TEMPTATION OFTEN CARRIES WITH IT TWO BIG LIES: (V).

Satan, the father of all lies, John 8: 44 tells us. Satan wants us to believe these two lies. Over and over in counseling, I am appalled at how often these two lies prevail in people’s hearts. 1. Just once won’t hurt. 2. Now that you have ruined your life, and you are beyond God’s use, you might as well enjoy sinning bigtime. You are slightly soiled, greatly reduced it price.” Listen to John 8: 44 which declares, “You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks out of his own character; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”

Sadly, one time of yielding to temptation could mean you overdose and die. Once could be the first and last time you yield to temptation. The Scripture tells us, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14: 12) Once you have yielded to sin, never bite the bullet of believing your whole life is ruined so you'd better just sin up a storm. God is in the business of restarting, rebooting, renewing, and reviving. With God, no case or cause is hopeless. Paul once was a murderer. David once was an adulterer, deceiver, and murderer. Noah once was a drunkard. Moses once was a murderer. Young people, and adults, stay pure sexually. But if some of you have failed, don't ever believe the lie you can no longer be a virgin in God's eyes as His Bride. I John 1: 9 is still in the Book of Books. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just/righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

You may have heard of the advice of the old country doctor, Doc Campbell. When he was confronted by a patient, he asked him the problem. The man said, "I broke my arm in two places." The good doctor replied, "Well then, stay out of those places!" That's excellent advice. We cannot regularly, in the face of temptation, listen to the enemy's lies, feel the pull, and not be affected. When faced with temptation, we need to take the good doctor's advice, "Stay out of those places." Sixthly,

TEMPTATION CANNOT BE OVERCOME IF YOU KEEP LISTENING TO THE DEVIL'S LIES: YOU'LL BE DECEIVED. Turn to James 1: 16, and please hear James imploring us all. He writes, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers." What happens if we keep looking or listening or we keep being lured and we stay in the same place, trying to keep up the fight. Initially, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 6: 18-20, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. So, sometimes we flee. Is that all? Oh no! We need to have our eyes so fixed on Jesus, that nothing or no lustful person, or no greedy thing can turn our heads. Paul tells us in Colossians 3: 1-2, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds (focus your vision) on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Hebrew 12: 2, tells that we overcome our besetting sins of falling into temptation by "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith."

Some people fall into temptation, but a great many of us are deceived because we make plans for disaster ahead of time. "Son," ordered his father, "Don't swim in that canal." "OK, Dad," he answered. But he came home carrying a wet bathing suit that evening. "Where have you been?" demanded the father. "Swimming in the canal," answered the boy. "Didn't I tell you not to swim there?" asked the father.

"Yes, Sir," answered the boy. "Why did you?" he asked. "Well, Dad," he explained, "I had my bathing suit with me, and I couldn't resist the temptation." "Why did you take your bathing suit with you?" he questioned. "So, I'd be prepared to swim, in case I was tempted," he replied. The Bible tells us we have three enemies to fight, the world, the flesh, and the devil. We can walk into the devil's temptations with our eyes wide open. The moment we find we are focusing, or looking away from Jesus, following a person, a thing, or a dream, immediately we must refocus, or it's all over. We'll be swimming in the forbidden canal. 7thly,

TEMPTATION CAN ONLY BE OVERCOME BY REMEMBERING ALL GOD HAS TO OFFER IS SO MUCH BETTER! What does James say in James 1: 17-18? Let me quote it from the New Living Translation. We read, "Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession." So, let's remember the last time we took the bait of the enemy. Didn't the bait look tempting? But go back to James 1: 15 and listen again, "Then desire when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death." We're coming to the end of this message. Some of you are nibbling at Satan's bait; others of you may be on the line, being pulled in, and you may feel like you are belly up on Satan's stringer.

You were hoping for joy, like a couple physically waiting for a baby to come, but spiritually, when sin gives birth, there is a baby, but it's awful. It's stillborn. There's a baby but it's dead. The wages of sin is death. Once in a great while, a full-term baby is stillborn. It's terrible! But spiritually speaking, all the conceptions from temptation to sin are stillborn. Sin's babies grow and grow and grow, and the baby is always not what you hoped for. If you never ever come to Jesus, you will one day look at what you've gotten for yielding to temptation and you will say, "I gave up Jesus, God's perfect gift for this? I drank from a broken cistern for this. I gave up the Spring of Living Water for this empty well and this unending eternal hell? I spent my wallet empty for this? Beloved, don't go for Satan's bait, because it ends in death, which means separation from God forever—an unending eternity without the Lover of your soul. It won't work out for you to take the bait. There will come a moment when there are no more chances. Come to Jesus today!

You say, "Why should I come to Jesus, and not surrender to temptation? Look at God's answer. God is saying for us all to hear, "I am better. I am the best. James 1: 17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." There's an answer for overcoming temptation as Jesus did and can help us to do. 1-7—Repeat. "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Amen.