

ARMED FOR WAR Discipleship Course

SECTION 8 – Overcoming Temptation

Lesson 29 - Overcoming Temptation Part 1

The reality is every one of us faces temptation. We face it all the time. You will never rise above being tempted. You can rise above having the temptation influence and affect you, but you'll never rise above being tempted. Jesus Himself, the perfect Son of God, was tempted.

As we approach this subject of overcoming temptation we are going to first deal with seven lies the enemy has sold us on about temptation. The enemy has ingrained these seven lies into the minds of many people, or at least some of these, that have actually allowed the enemy to continue to lead them down the path to bondage.

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

The Bible says He was tempted in all points; and I promise you, if He wasn't tempted sexually, He wasn't tempted in all points like as we are. He was tempted with lust. He was tempted with perversion. He was tempted with anger, with rage, with violence. He was tempted in all points like as we are.

Some theologians say this was the three temptations in the wilderness and that was it: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. No, Jesus was tempted. He was tempted on the cross to get Himself down. The devil spoke through the other thief when he challenged Jesus to save Himself. He was being tempted even up to the point of dying on the cross. He was being tempted to disobey the Word of God, to disobey the will of God.

If Jesus, the Son of God, was tempted in all points like as we are, then we're going to get tempted. One of the areas where the devil plays on you, is that we come under the realm of condemnation as Christians simply because we're facing temptation.

I remember a situation in my life as a young Christian. I was going to school, and I was working in the computer lab in the university. My job was to check people in, and check them out. I went through a season, about six weeks, of the most intensive mind battle that I'd ever experienced at any time in my Christian walk. I would hear these thoughts come in my mind telling me I was going to have a dirty, vile thought. Then someone would come in and sign into the book, and I'd see them and I'd have a vile, unholy image in my mind. I'd mentally undress them. This image would pop into my mind.

I had learned about spiritual warfare so I bound that thing in the name of Jesus. I cast down that thought. I rejected it. But then I would feel so horrible afterwards for having ever had the

ARMED FOR WAR Discipleship Course

SECTION 8 – Lesson 29

thought. I would feel so condemned for having the thought, that it just would wear on me. Then a few minutes later it would happen again. I was getting so beat up emotionally that when I got into the car I would cry, grateful that I didn't have to look at anybody else the rest of the day.

For four weeks I cried out to God and asked Him what was wrong with me. Then the Lord spoke to me and said, "Son, your battle is not lust. You're doing what you're supposed to do. The thoughts come in, you take authority in My Son's name. You bind it, you cast that thought down. You reject it. What you're battling is not lust, what you're battling is condemnation."

Here's the strategy of the enemy. He first threatens you and says, "I'm going to tempt you. You're going to have a thought." Then the devil puts a thought in your mind and blames you for having the thought that he put in your mind and makes you feel guilty for it. Many Christians who really want to live for God, who really start going after God, start getting worn down because they still have temptations. And even if they're overcoming temptations, they feel guilty for having the temptation in the first place.

This is in part because we have not done a very good job explaining and being honest from the pulpits. We portray and pretend that we somehow have this unbelievable or unparalleled victory that we are so far above even being tempted. We may not say that we're never tempted, but we imply it. People are left to believe that ministers never battle anything, yet nothing could be further from the truth. We all face temptation. If Jesus faced temptation, even at the point of His greatest victory, how much more so will we?

What is the strategy of the devil when we are tempted?

The strategy of the devil is to bring condemnation for even being tempted in the first place; to make you feel bad, evil, or wicked for having the temptation.

Temptation isn't sin.

In Hebrews 4 verse 15 it tells us that Jesus was tempted but did not sin. You can be tempted and not sin, because temptation isn't sin. We shouldn't allow the devil to beat us down, or beat ourselves down with condemnation simply because we were tempted.

Hebrews 2:17-18 AMP *So it is evident that it was essential that He be made like His brethren in every respect, in order that He might become a merciful (sympathetic) and faithful High Priest in the things related to God, to make atonement and propitiation for the people's sins.*

18For because He Himself [in His humanity] has suffered in being tempted (tested and tried), He is able [immediately] to run to the cry of (assist, relieve) those who are being tempted and tested and tried [and who therefore are being exposed to suffering].

ARMED FOR WAR Discipleship Course

SECTION 8 – Lesson 29

There is a suffering that can come with temptation, a torment. And all of you can say a big “Amen!” on that one. Yet the torment of the temptation of sin is nothing in comparison to the torment of the consequences of sin. Always remember this with the fear of God in mind; there is nothing in comparison to the torment of the consequences of sin. The torment that you’ll go through if you actually act on that temptation will be much worse than you fighting and resisting that temptation.

Seven Lies About Temptation

Lie #1 - “I can’t resist it.”

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had people come to me as I’ve pastored young people around the world as well as pastors and leaders that claim they couldn’t resist the temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

You will never ever, ever, ever face a temptation that you are not in the spiritual condition to be able to bear it. God will always leave you a way out.

Reminds me of the young man that went into a lady’s office in his workplace. He had just walked in the door and she started grabbing him and started kissing on him. He said, “Oh no, no, no, no.” She starts trying to take his clothes off, and he said, “Oh God help me. Oh God help me.” Then she started passionately going after him. He said, “Oh God, Oh God! I can’t resist! Oh God help me!” And the Lord speaks to him and says, “There’s the door! Run!” Sometimes the most spiritual way to resist is to run. Get up and run!

God will always leave you a way out, but listen to me. Sometimes the way out means you might have to be willing to offend somebody that you’re around, even family.

The idea that you can’t resist is a lie. It’s a lie from the pit of hell. God always leaves you a way out. But when we believe the lie, it allows the enemy to be empowered in our lives. We then believe that there are certain temptations that we are just too weak to resist. It’s not that you’re too weak to resist. You’re just too unwilling to do what it takes to resist. God said in His Word, there is no temptation that has come your way that He hasn’t given you a way out. And there’s no temptation that’s come your way that you are not able to bear. We’ve got to break the lie of the enemy that you can’t resist temptation. That’s a lie from the pit of hell. You always can. You just don’t always choose to.

ARMED FOR WAR Discipleship Course

SECTION 8 – Lesson 29

Lie #2: The devil made me do it.

We might not say it that way, but we sure act like it. We claim to be overcome by temptation. We claim the devil's been chasing and tormenting us, or that something came over us. The devil didn't make you do it.

There are the powers of spirits that try to influence us. There are the power of spirits that try to lead us in a wrong direction. Absolutely! There is the influence of the enemy, absolutely. But the Bible says that no weapon formed against you shall prosper. (Isaiah 54:17) Jesus said, "Behold, I give unto thee power over all the power of the enemy, and he shall by no means harm you!" (Luke 10:19)

We may not literally say, "The devil made me do it," but we run around blaming him. We often get caught up in an emotional attempt to get delivered from demons. We're not getting delivered because we're trying to get delivered from something that's not a demon; it's a work of the flesh. We blame the devil. It's just an excuse so that we don't have to take responsibility for our actions.

The enemy is real, and demon powers are real. We need to break their powers over people. Don't get me wrong, but we have got to stop blaming the devil.

What does God say about any temptation when we blame the devil for making us do it?

God says that as a born again believer there isn't any temptation coming your way that's not common to man. And God has always given you a way out.

John 4:4 KJV *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

Lie #3 - It came upon me all of a sudden.

It never happens that way. Christians are rarely, rarely tempted and knocked off course from a head on, one time assault of the enemy. It just doesn't happen that way. It's usually a process of time. The devil doesn't come and hit you just head on and knock you off course. He comes and does a series of sideswipes, each time knocking you just a little farther off course. So that before long, you're going totally in the wrong direction.

Your actions are a consummation of your thoughts. You don't have actions that are not based on your thoughts. A thought, meditated upon long enough, concentrated on long enough, given the right opportunity, will produce an action. The reason Christians fall into temptation is because

ARMED FOR WAR Discipleship Course

SECTION 8 – Lesson 29

they meditated on it for quite some time. They had a series of thoughts that they didn't properly address and deal with. They didn't attack those thoughts. They didn't take authority over those thoughts. They dwelt on them. They meditated on them. They let their minds begin to consider, to fantasize about that sin, whatever that sin is. They begin to run it through their mind.

Maybe they fantasize about getting angry at somebody. They dream over and over in their mind about getting revenge. They dream about getting stuff. They're always lusting for things so much that they move into the spirits of greed and covetousness. Over and over and over these thoughts enter their minds and they fail to deal with them correctly. Then what seems like all of a sudden, they act on those thoughts. It is usually a long period of time of thinking on the thoughts and the thoughts keep building and building and building.

The projector in their minds produces a movie; an image of how the devil wanted them to truly act. Then given the right opportunity, the right circumstances where they felt like they could get away with it, given that right situation they will act on those thoughts. They claim it suddenly happened. No, it didn't suddenly happen to you. The door was open long, long before by what you allowed your mind to meditate on.

When we believe these lies of the enemy it gives him, through those lies, a stronghold to keep us in bondage. But they are lies from the pit of hell.

For Further Study:

James 1:12-13 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

Matthew 26:41 *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*