

PRECEPTS FOR LIFE
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SERIES: Israel

TITLE: Program 7 – How to Find Victory Over Temptation

TUESDAY

OPEN

I'm sorry. I couldn't help it. The devil made me do it. There was no way that I could resist. Yes my friend, there is a devil and he's very, very real. But O my friend, you can never say, "The devil made me do it." Do you know why? Because it's not the devil that makes the choice, it's you, whether you decide to listen to the devil or whether you decide to listen to God.

PART ONE

If I were to ask you, "Who do you think was the closest to God?" I know that you would have to say, "Surely it was God's Son." And you're right. He was close to God. And yet His life has some tremendous lessons for us, lessons of dependence, lessons that show us our need to rely on God and to rely on God's Word. When Jesus Christ was born He was born of a virgin. He was born without sin. The Bible tells us that He was tempted in all points as we are and yet without sin. Yet the Bible tells us He was tempted. He was

tempted like you and I are tempted. And if you and I can understand that temptation and we can understand what He went through, I think we can pick up some precepts for life, beloved, that will help us so that you and I can understand how vital it is that we stay close to God, how vital it is that you and I recognize that we have an enemy and that that enemy is a tempter and that that enemy wants to draw us away from God. I want to take you to Matthew, chapter 3. In Matthew, chapter 3, we have an account of the baptism of Jesus Christ. That baptism took place in the wilderness of Judea. And it was John the Baptist baptizing. His baptism was a baptism of repentance. In other words, to have a change of mind about who you are. Have a change of mind about your relationship with God. Bring forth the fruit of repentance. Show how serious you are about following God. And as he was baptizing it says, “Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ But Jesus answering said to him...,” And this is so important. “...Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting...to fulfill all righteousness. [And] Then he [John the Baptist] permitted Him. [And] After being baptized, Jesus [went] up immediately from the water...”(Matthew 3:13-16a) And listen, this is so key for your understanding how to draw near to God, how to have victory over temptation. It says, “...and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending [on Him] as a dove...and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom [I’m] well-pleased.’”(3:16b-17) Now what do we know? We know that Jesus wanted to fulfill all righteousness. That Jesus wanted to do everything God’s way. And what Jesus models for us, from this point forward, is the fact that Jesus, who was God incarnate, who was God in the flesh, that Jesus always and only did those things that pleased the Father. Jesus walked in total dependence upon the Father. In John, chapter 5, it says, [“The works that the Father does, I do. The words that the Father speaks, I speak. The Son can do nothing in and of himself.”](PARAPHRASE John 5:19) Now it wasn’t that the Son was not

able. He was God in the flesh. He was omnipotence. He was omniscience. He was eternity. He was all the things, all the attributes of God. And yet, how did Jesus walk? On this earth, He walked like you and I are to walk. He walked in the power of the Holy Spirit. So what happens to Jesus Christ after He's baptized, after the Spirit of God descends on Him as a dove? Well let's look at it. In chapter 4, verse 1, it says, "Then Jesus was led...by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry." (Matthew 4:1-2) Where was He? He was in the wilderness. How did Jesus get here? Jesus was led by the Spirit. The Spirit led Him here to the wilderness so that Jesus could be tempted in all points so you and I would have a high priest, a person who could understand what we go through, who could understand our temptations. Remember and follow me carefully back to the Garden of Eden. Remember the first Adam. Remember how he was put in a perfect environment, in a very, very lush garden where he had everything that he needed. And remember how the serpent came into the garden and as that serpent came into the garden the serpent tempted Eve. Eve listened to the serpent. Eve took the fruit of the tree. She ate the fruit of the tree. She gave it to her husband. Her husband ate. And the Bible says in Romans, chapter 5, verse 12, "[That by] one man sin entered into the world, and death [by] sin..." (Romans 5:12) What happened? Adam and Eve, created in the image of God, Adam and Eve, given dominion over all the earth, Adam and Eve made by God, male and female and appointed as God's vice regents over all the earth, Adam and Eve chose to believe a lie. They chose to listen to the serpent of old. And in that listening, they lost their dominion of this earth. And one reigned above them. And that one that reigned above them was the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air. Now, in Jesus we have, as the Bible tells us in Romans, the last Adam. Here is man, created again, man created in the image of God, man who is God, man who was born without sin, so that He might taste death for you and me. But this man has to be tempted also. And so the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to be

tempted by the devil, so that you and I, Beloved, can see that it is possible for us to draw so close to God, for us to so lean against the everlasting rock, for us to hide ourselves in the cleft of the rock. The rock is God. And in Deuteronomy Moses says, “[Ah] The Rock...all [of] His ways are just...”(Deuteronomy 32:4a) And he’s talking about God. And He wants you and I to see that it is possible for man to hide in the Rock. It is possible for man to live in total dependence upon God. It is possible for you and me to be close to the Father. And in that closeness, to find victory over sin and victory over temptation. Now, listen to what he says. “And the tempter came....”(Matthew 4:3a) Now listen, He’s been fasting forty days and forty nights in this wilderness there is no place for any food to be found whatsoever. “And after...fast[ing] forty days and forty nights...the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’”(4:2-3) Now, could Jesus do that? Could Jesus say to this stone, “Become a loaf of bread.”? Yes He could. And would it become a loaf of bread? Yes. Because who is Jesus? Well, John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things came into being [by] Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being....”(John 1:1-3) So Jesus could have spoken to the rock. He could have spoken and said, “Become bread.” And He could have eaten. But listen to what He says. He says, “...‘It is written, [that] “Man shall not live [by] bread alone, but [man shall live by] every word that [comes] out of the mouth of God.”’”(Matthew 4:4) Now Jesus could have done that. Jesus was hungry. He had fasted forty days and forty nights. He had gone without food. And now He’s being tempted. Satisfy yourself. Take things into your own hands. You’ve got a need. You’ve got a desire. You’ve got a craving. And what did Jesus do? When you read through the temptation of Jesus in Matthew and Mark and Luke, you will see that every time the devil tempts Him with a different temptation, He says, “It is written.” And what Jesus does, when he says, “Command that these stones be made into bread.” He takes the devil back to Deuteronomy, chapter 8. Now listen. Understand one

thing. We have one and only one offensive weapon against the devil and that's the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And that's what Jesus did. He just was wielding that Word until He went finally "uhn" and the devil left Him. In Deuteronomy, chapter 8, God is speaking. And He's speaking through Moses and He's speaking to the children of Israel. And He's saying, "All the commandments that [I'm] commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. [And] You shall remember all the way which the Lord...led you in the wilderness these forty years..." Now listen, "...that He might humble you, testing you..." (Deuteronomy 8:1) God tests us. He permits you and I to be in difficult situations so that we might build our spiritual muscles, so that we might turn to God. But God is always there. He's not going to let you slip. He will never tempt you above what you are able to bare, what you are able to handle. I'll be right back in a moment. Just know that these are words of life that will draw you closer and closer and hide you in the Rock who is God.

PART TWO

What's the secret of staying close to God? What's the secret of power? What's the secret of victory? It's understanding what Jesus said to the devil that day when the devil brought Him into this wilderness to tempt Him. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 it says, ["There is no temptation, there's no trial, there's no testing but such as is common to man. And God is faithful! Our Rock is faithful who will not permit you to be tried or tested or tempted above what you are able to bare!"] (PARAPHRASE 1 Corinthians 10:13) Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, but He knew that it was not more than He could bear. And listen to me, Precious One, whatever you are enduring right now, whatever your flesh is longing for and craving for, you need to understand this, it is not more than you can bear. God has a word for you. And so God says, "...[I tested you that I] might humble you...to know what

was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”(Deuteronomy 8:2b) Every tests, every time you and I come to something that is luring us away from God, it’s a test to see: Will we obey God? Will we cling to Him? And then he says, “[And] He humbled you and [He] let you be hungry, and [He] fed you with manna which you did not know, nor...your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but [he] lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”(8:3) This is how you live. You live by the Word of God. And then listen very carefully. But listen, He warned them, “When you have eaten and [you] are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land [that the Lord] has given you. [But] Beware [lest] you...forget the Lord...by not keeping His commandments and His ordinance and His statutes which I am commanding you today...,”(8:10-11) He says, [“Lest you be satisfied and you turn away from God, that you turn away from your total dependence upon God, that you turn away from clinging to God as the waistband clings to the waist of a man.”] (PARAPHRASE 8:12-20)God wants you to live where? Right here in the shelter of His arms, right here, underneath His wings. That’s where God wants you to dwell. He wants you to dwell close to Him. And when the devil brought Jesus into this wilderness, Jesus looked at that devil and He said, “...‘It is written, “Man [does] not live [by] bread alone, but [by] every word that [comes] out of the mouth of God.”’”(Matthew 4:4) In other words, [“My God is going to supply all of my needs and I’m not going to listen to you. I’m going to listen to my God.”](PARAPHRASE 4:4) And that’s the way Jesus Christ lived. Well let’s go on and let’s go back to Matthew, chapter 4. And let’s see what else He says to him as he tempts Him. In Matthew, chapter 4, he tells us, “Then [he] took [Jesus to a city]...to the holy city and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple.”(4:5) And this is what he said. “...‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written...,’” Now listen, “...for it is written, ‘He will [give] His angels [charge over] You.’”(4:6a) In other words, look, [“You’re the Son of God. You can do anything You want.

Throw Yourself down. Let His angels take charge of You as You catapult Yourself to the ground. Let His angels capture You and rescue You. Think of the scene that it will make.”](PARAPHRASE 4:6) And once again, Jesus turns to the devil and this is what He says, “...It is [also] written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”(4:7) You know what? When you and I think that because we’re children of God, or because we’ve attained a certain status, because maybe we’re a public figure or maybe, we are an author or maybe we have risen to a certain position of the church and we’ve put ourselves in this high status, then we think, “Listen, there’s special privileges for me. There’s certain things that others can’t do and get away with it, but I’m one of God’s favorites. And because I’m one of God’s favorites, I can do it. I can fudge. I can hedge on the Word of God and I can get away with it.” That’s thinking that you can do something that is special or different and get away with it because you are special and you are different. But you’re wrong. In fact, you’re deadly wrong if you think that. And then he goes on to say in verse 8, “Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and [he] showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and He said to Him, ‘All these things I will give to You, if You [will] fall down and worship me.’”(4:8-9) What did the devil want? The devil wanted, listen very carefully, the same thing that he got from Adam and Eve. He wanted them to bow before him, to listen to him, to honor him above God. And Jesus again said, [It is written] “... ‘[Be gone] Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God...,”” Now listen, ““...and serve Him only.”””(4:10) Here He uses two different words that are translated for worship. One, “proskuneo”, which means to bow down. And the other one, “latreuo”, which is an act of worship by serving God. What was the devil saying? The devil was saying, [“Listen, serve me, serve me. I’ll give You a crown and it will never cost You a cross.”](PARAPHRASE 4:9) Beloved, if you go through the history of the church, you will see people that all of a sudden, are faced with either death by holding fast to God or life by denying Him. Some have denied Him and they’ve bitterly

regretted it. Why? Because they feared the face of man, because they feared death. And God says that [“we are not to fear man who is able to kill the body. Instead we are to fear God who is able to cast both body and soul into hell.”](PARAPHRASE Matthew 10:28) God alone is the one that we are to fear. God alone is the one that you and I are to worship. You know, as you go back to 1 John... In 1 John he warns them and he tells them, “Listen, you be very very careful.” He says, “I [have written] to you, fathers, because you know Him who [was] from the beginning. I [have written] to you, young men, because [you are strong and the Word of God abides in you and] you have overcome the evil one....”(1 John 2:13) And then he says this, “Do not love the world, nor the things [that are] in the world....”(2:15a) What was the devil saying? [“Look at all the kingdoms of this world and know this that I will give them to you if you will simply bow down, if you will simply worship me.”] (PARAPHRASE Matthew 4:9) But Jesus knew that the devil only has rule over the kingdoms of this world temporarily. Jesus knew that He had been called by God to rescue men from the power of the evil one. Jesus knew that the things of this world are temporal. That the things of this world are passing away and eternity waits. So, “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”(1 John 2:16) The Bible tells us in 1 John 5, verse 19, “...that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”(1 John 5:19b) And listen to me very carefully, my friend. The devil would love to offer you the world. The devil would love to offer you anything that you’re little heart desires just to keep you from worshipping God. And what does God say to you? Listen, love not the world, nor the things in this world. Draw near to Him. That’s where you’ll find everything you need.