

Daily Devotional, April 30, 2020 Victory Over Temptation

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” 1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV)

Throughout the gospels Jesus can often be found confronting demons or evil spirits and even being tempted by Satan. The Bible makes it clear that Satan is an intelligent, cunning enemy and one who would easily defeat us if the Lord were not at our side. Satan schemes and is strategic in his tempting. We see this in Luke 4:13 when it concludes Jesus' temptation in the wilderness: *“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”*

But Satan is not our only enemy. We have two other enemies: at times, our surrounding culture (“the world”), and ourselves—“the old self”, that is, the habits, yearnings, needs, and plans that are not in line with what Jesus wishes for our lives. So as Christians, all we have to do is resist these three forces, trust in God, and things will work out just fine, right?

Not so much. How many times have well-meaning fellow Christians told you *“Just trust God”* as if it were a simple miracle cure to whatever ails you? The problem is not actually with the advice that was given, but with the assumption that heeding and utilizing that advice should be easy.

Whenever we come up against temptations that seem to overwhelm us, our ability to trust in God quickly deteriorates. We see that time and time again all throughout the Bible and we continue to witness this human frailty today in God's people. From the first pages of Genesis where we witness the temptation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), to the Israelite's fall into idolatry (Exodus 32), beginning with their worship of the golden calf, to the many years of going back and forth, like a tug of war, between God and their many adopted idols (1 & 2 Kings). God's people have always struggled with the faith to depend only on our one God.

It's the same struggle for *us* today. In our weakened state, we're caught scrambling to meet our own needs to remain safe, seek fulfillment, and pursue satisfaction without much thought about depending on God to provide for us. It is no wonder, then, that we also easily find ourselves stuck in sinful habits, surrounded by voices that get stuck in our heads, blaming and condemning us, worse yet, blaming and even cursing God for allowing this situation to occur. There are moments when all we can think of is casting blame and then seeking escape and solace by whatever means is closest at hand.

What is it that has to change in order for us to begin seeing victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil?

First of all, we must resist the lies that are being whispered in our ear that we are worthless and abandoned, and instead begin to embrace our true identity as one fully known and fully loved by a savior who has fought valiantly to overcome Satan's lies and other destructive forces. Feeling alone, weak, and helpless, and cut off from other believers, focuses us inwardly on our troubles, so that we are distracted from watching out for danger and become vulnerable to Satan's attacks.

Secondly, our mandated isolation restricts us from the contact and dependence on our Christian community, risking vulnerability to Satan's attacks and separation from our brothers and sisters in Jesus. Never hesitate to call on friends from your family of believers for support and compassion. We are in this to lean on one another. Make that phone call, set up a Zoom or Facetime get together. Reach out now!

And finally, learn to depend on God. We must do the physical and mental work and practices of resistance, and letting God have our anxieties also means we need to take action--to seek God's help. However, once we submit our cares and anxieties to God, according to Peter, our suffering will “Only last a little while”, for beyond this, we are promised life eternal, where there will be no suffering.

We are told in John 16:33 the Christian life is not going to be easy: ***“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*** Our lives consist of the contrast between peace and trouble. Christ’s peace and ultimate victory over the world does not mean the absence of trouble. His presence instead allows us to have courage and hope. Courage, that God will provide for us in the midst of this arduous, dangerous task of resistance, and hope that our God-sustained resistance will ultimately bring freedom and victory!

Prayer: Dear God, please give me the strength to overcome sin and the grace to resist temptations. Help me to live uprightly with you, but when I fall, lead me to you and my family in Christ to give me support and to help increase my faith in you. Bless me with grace to seek out repentance, so that I can be fit for your kingdom. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.