

**Introduction:**

- We have been looking at Spiritual Warfare in the month of November.
  - We know there is an unseen realm in which incredible spiritual battles are taking place.
  - We also know that in order for a Spiritual warrior to be a winner in the heavenlies he must overcome in the temptation in the natural first. **The greatest spiritual warriors are those who win over temptation.** Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, overcame and took His authority into the heavenlies.
  - I want to speak to us today on how to overcome temptation and win spiritual battles.
  - The cattle company.
- Gen 3:1-5. Luke 4:1-14

**I. What is Temptation?**

- A. Temptation Defined: Temptation in the verb form means to examine.
  - 1. Ie. In a court of law the attorneys seek to examine and cross examine the witnesses/or person being tried to see if there are any weaknesses in their testimony.
  - 2. The devil is constantly seeking/attempting to examine your life for possible weakness in your testimony for Christ. He want to neutralize you. When you give in to temptation you are being spiritually neutralized.
- B. Temptation appeals to your God given desires.
  - 1. Desires are God given. And desires are good. IE. We have desire to eat. We have sexual desires (these are God given). We have desires to learn and grow in knowledge/understand things. No one is exempt from being tempted.
  - 2. Temptation appeals to those desires and seeks to fulfill them in a way outside the structure of the Kingdom of God/outside of Gods created order. *"Temptation is any outside source that appeals to a weakness in your flesh.* That appeal pulls you like a magnet; it lures you mentally, emotionally, and sensually; it fascinates the imagination; it entices the flesh to take a closer peek. If you don't stop this process, it will set its hook in your soul and haul you right smack dab into the middle of some kind of sin!" (from Sparkling Gems from the Greek, © 2003 by Rick Renner) It can be anything from being too lazy, to being to easily offended, to unbridled eating habits, or sexual habits, gossip, etc.
- C. The Strategies of the serpent are to lure us away from the truth.
  - 1. Three strategies the devils uses in tempting people has not changed. How he tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is how he tempted Jesus in Wilderness and it is how he will tempt you today.
  - 2. Therefore know you enemy. He has not changed in thousands of years. To get victory we must see the horror of what temptation really is in light of the victory we have in Christ.
  - 3. The enemy is incremental. He is gradual and wise in his plans of destruction for our lives. He doesn't set you up to fall all at once. He lets you make a series of decisions in the wrong direction which ultimately brings you into his three fold strategy: He attacks our identity. He confuses our desires. He shifts our destiny.

## II. The devils strategy

- A. First, he attacks our identity. Lust of the flesh. This is the first step in the cycle of temptation. It is where the serpent tripped Eve and where He also attacked Jesus. (The serpent, a reptile, approaches Eve like he is Lord over her.) At the very beginning of the human story is the question: "Who are you?" Lets look at Lk 4:3,9 *If you are the Son of God*...is an attack on the testimony of Jesus (I am the Son of God) and the witness of Father (this is my Son). It is a question of identity. Who are you really? Your actions will speak for themselves. Ie. Esau sold his birthright because he forgot who he was.
1. Temptation is all about testing the Sons relationship with the Father. When you are being tempted it is a question of "Are you really a son of God?" Jesus had a testimony: "I am the Son of God." The Father had a testimony: "This is my Son." In Jesus baptism He identified with us and the Father identified himself with Jesus. To win at temptation we have to know we are His!
  2. Satan is attacking that testimony. Adam was the son of God Lk3:38, Israel was the son of God (Ex 4:22-23, Hos. 11:1) Jesus was the son of God, (This was declaration of His Kingship and of war!) We are sons of God. Satan is looking to exploit a weakness so that the destiny of Jesus is neutralized; so that the Gift that He is and the gift that he carries is compromised and rendered in effective. That is what Satan is after in each of us. It is not about the 'apple' it about the neutralizing of the kingdom within you and your family, and realm of influence.
  3. This temptation challenged Jesus to doubt His position or undermine his confidence, or forget who He was. Again, it is a question that is an attack on His identity. **\*\*\*"Identity confusion is the reason people are able to affirm one thing and do another."\*\*** Russel Moore p. 36.
- B. Secondly, Satan confuses our desires. Lust of Eyes
1. James 1:14 James each of us are tempted when we are lured away by our own evil desires. God designed us to recognize beauty, power, and influence. That is how he was able to tempt Eve with the fruit. He lured her away. (That apple was appealing. She would be like God.) Ie. Again, Esau could smell the stew. He was lured away from his identity by his desires. His desires lured him to death.
  2. Demonic powers work not in opposition but in full cooperation of what you want. IE Judo.
  3. Satan tempts us and God tests us. Two different things that have to do with motives. Satans motive is to lead us away from our identity with Christ. God tests us so that we know that we are identified with Christ. Adam, Israel, Job, David, Saul, etc. Ie. Dt 1:31 In the wilderness almost immediately the Israelites start questioning are we the sons of God? Which allows them to confuse their desire and complain against God.
  4. Jesus had to reclaim human desire under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
- C. He seeks to shift our destiny. Pride of Life. Jesus was already a King. Yet Satan tempts Him to shift His destiny to become a prince under Satan. (Bondage, death)
1. The final step of temptation is the challenging of your future, your destiny. James 1:15 Desire gives way to sin, sin when full grown leads to death. **\*\*\*\***Temptation only works if the possible future's life is concealed. Ie. Had Adam and Eve known the future of the wrong choice they would have never eaten the fruit! Satan's cover/lie... "You will not die."

2. What Esau lost was not simply his. It belonged to his entire family line. Now it was gone and never to be regained.
3. The Kingdom of God is opposite the desert! And Satan does not want any of us to have it.
4. Your future with out God is the worse horror story you will ever know. If you can see and see what God is offering instead it will affect your choice.

### III. God's Answer To Overcoming Temptation

- A. Know who you are. Knowing who you are will strengthen your resolve to win over temptation.
  1. When Jesus was baptize here is what the Father said to Him: *"You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy."* (Luke 3:22, NLT) God knew what His Son was about to face and the best thing He could give Him was the reassurance of His identity. "YOU ARE MY SON!"
  2. God knew what Satan would use against Jesus. Therefore He prepared him. IE. When Satan tempted Jesus, "If you are the Son of God?" It was to get Him to doubt His identity.
  3. This is a direct attack on relationship. A man who is tempted to commit adultery, is experiencing a direct attack on his relationship with his wife.
  4. What was Jesus testimony? "I am the Son of God." What was the Father's testimony? "This is my Son." So for the devil to ask, "If you are the Son of God." was a temptation to cause Jesus to doubt both His and His Father's testimony of relationship.
  5. Revelation 12:11 They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony.
  6. If Satan can exploit you and cause you to doubt who you are and you fall for it...he will neutralize your testimony.
- B. Know there is a way out. And Look for it. IE. Always know where you are and know the ways out.
  1. *"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."* (1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT)
  2. A God promised way of escape.
    - a) Escape come from the word ekbasis. This is a compound word. ek meaning "out of" and basin meaning "to walk". When put together is means to walk out, as to walk out of a difficult place; walk out of a trap; or walk out of a place that is not good for you.
  3. You have to take the way of escape! **Escape is a God promised provision** to the tempted.
    - a) Ie. Joseph when tempted by Potifers wife, Gen 39:12 says he *"fled and ran outside."* He did not stay to negotiate his way out. How would the story in the Garden of Eden gone is Adam and Eve had ran from the serpent.
    - b) Paul in 1 Cor 6:18 says "Flee sexual immorality!" Run! 1 Cor 10:14 "flee idolatry!" RUN!
    - c) *"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so **run from all these evil things**. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness."* (1 Timothy 6:10-11, NLT)
    - d) *"**Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts**. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts."* (2 Timothy 2:22, NLT)
- C. Know the Word The Word works because it is Truth!

1. Jesus responded to each temptation with *"It is written!"* This tells me two things about Jesus before He faced this severe tempting in the wilderness.
  - a) One, He knew immediately when the devil began to twist the Word. Jesus knew what God had said and he knew exactly how God felt about the desire and temptation at hand.
  - b) Two, He went on the offensive when tempted by quoting the Word...by speaking the Truth.
  - c) Most everyone wants the temptation to go away but how many will invest the time in the Word to overcome. You can't live by pizza alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.
  - d) John 6:63, Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17 take up the sword of the Spirit! Which is the Word!
- D. Know the Holy Spirit is meant to be your companion. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the Holy Spirit led Him.
  1. Be led by the Holy Spirit...and you will not satisfy the lusts of the flesh.
  2. Grow your relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- E. Know yourself: The devil left Jesus until a more opportune time. What is that? An opportune time to attack is:
  1. Right after a great victory.
  2. When you are physically and emotionally weak.
  3. When you are stressed.
  4. When you are afraid.
  5. When you are not where you should be. IE. David, when Kings go to war stayed behind. 2 Sam 11:1-ff
  6. When your strength become your weakness.
- F. Know the devil is play for keeps ...he is out to destroy you, mar the image of God in you, neutralize your authority and take you life.

**Conclusion:**

- Know:
  - Who you are.
  - There is a way out.
  - The Word.
  - The Holy Spirit
  - Yourself.
- *"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8, NLT)
- Invitation...

You may want to consider The Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis, for a family devotion with grade schoolers and up.