

Blessed Assurance

Part 4

Overcoming Temptation

God has given us victory over temptation

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Presented

Sunday, August 19, 2018

at

**Zion Lutheran Church
Cooperstown, ND**

by

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Call to Worship

Psalm 91:14-16

Scripture Reading

1 John 2:15-17

Sermon Text

1 John 2:15-17

(And other texts)

Praise Chorus

Blessing

2 Corinthians 13:14

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Notes and Acknowledgments

Call to Worship

Responsive Reading

Psalm 91:14-16 New International Version (NIV)

14 “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

15 He will call on me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him

and show him my salvation.”

Prayer

Scripture Reading

1 John 2:15-17 New International Version (NIV)

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Prayer

Illustration

In early 2001 some towns in India were stricken by a plague of monkeys. The monkeys were so numerous they would invade homes, bite people, and make off with food supplies. It was agreed the monkey's would have to be caught and relocated. The people in these towns resorted to a traditional method for catching them. They gathered their old milk bottles, tied them to the ground, and then placed something sweet such as a candy or cookies inside the bottle. Then when a monkey comes along and sees the sweets he places his hand inside the bottle, but with the sweets enclosed in his palm his fist is too big to get back out the bottle. Our monkey will pull and push in an effort to get that sweet treat out, but he will not let it go, not even as his captors approach. And so the monkey is caught, literally with his hand in the cookie jar!

Often in life we are like the monkey, presented with an attractive offer, yet knowing that unless we let go of it, it will destroy us.

Today we will linger a bit in the second chapter of 1 John and deep dive into the topic of temptation. We, the church, possess all that is required to overcome every temptation. In fact, for every temptation there is a way of escape through Him who gives us strength.

Let's begin by being clear on what temptation is. Temptation is the allure to disobey God which we call sin. Temptation in itself, however, is not sin. Even Jesus was tempted and yet was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15 New International Version (NIV)

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin..

And you and I have the same power and authority living within us, if we are connected to Christ, to claim victory over every temptation just as Jesus did.

All temptation falls into three categories: Lust of the flesh, lust the eyes, and the pride of life. If you don't believe me just go back to the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:6 New International Version (NIV)

*6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was **good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom**, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

The fruit was good for food (lust of the flesh), pleasing to the eye (lust of the eyes), and desirable for gaining wisdom (pride of life).

Let's now fast forward about 4000 years to the time of Christ. Jesus had just been baptized and had ventured into the desert where he was tempted by the devil three times. I won't read the text today, but we find this story in Matthew 4:3-20.

Jesus' first temptation was to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread which is lust of the flesh.

Jesus' second temptation was to do something spectacular by throwing Himself off the temple. This was lust of the eyes.

Jesus' third temptation was to be given authority to rule kingdoms in all their glory which is the pride of life.

So you see that these three categories of temptation are nothing new. In fact, they date back to the early days of creation. Every temptation you face is serving as an allure to either satisfy your physical body, your wondering eye, or your prideful arrogance.

The lust of the Flesh

This first category of temptation can manifest itself in various ways including sexual misconduct, violence, drugs, alcohol, gluttony and the like. It desires to bring unholy pleasure to your physical body.

Galatians 5:19-21 New International Version (NIV)

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

A headline once read: “Woman on quest to become world's fattest”. The article went on to tell of 33 year old Suzanne Eman of Arizona who seeks to beat the world record for the heaviest person on the planet by weighing 1,610 pounds. In order to achieve that weight her 20,000-plus calorie diet daily consists of eating the following:

- 4 to 5 donuts
- 7 egg omelets with a cup and a half of cheese and a package of ham
- 4 to 5 potatoes made into hashbrowns
- Full package of bacon
- 4 corn dogs dipped in nacho cheese
- Couple of strawberries
- Large pepperoni pizza
- 2 bowls of ice cream
- 1 bag of peanut M&Ms
- 2 bacon cheeseburgers
- 1 box of Mac 'N' Cheese
- 3 bananas
- 6 avocados made into guacamole
- 1 full bag of chips
- 10 fish tacos
- Rice and beans
- 1 full bag of honey buns
- 1 box of hot pockets
- 1 bag of pepperoni

Suzanne ate a meal every 45 minutes and is consuming 11 times the normal amount of food as that of the average woman her age.

Lust of the flesh desires to satisfy the cravings of the human body to the point that it is unhealthy and quite disobedient to the Word of God.

The lust of the eyes

The second category makes itself evident in the form of looking at things that we shouldn't look at. This really is a form of covetousness. You've heard the phrase, "The grass is always greener on the other side" – this is a great idiom that reflects this second category of temptation.

2 Samuel 11:2-3 New International Version (NIV)

2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

King David seemingly had it all – money, power, and fame. Yet, one moment of lust; one moment of saying yes to the desire of his wondering eye unleashed a tidal wave of suffering and despair that swept over lives of so many.

When David first noticed Bathsheba bathing, he had not yet sinned. He could have turned his eyes away and retired to his within his palace. He could have escaped the temptation by fleeing it's allure just as Joseph sprinted away when Potifer's wife attempted to seduce him (Genesis 39:6-23). Yet his sin came when he acted on the temptation. He probably took a second look, or allowed his eyes to linger. He sent someone to find out about this woman. The sin was not in the temptation, but was in the surrender to the temptation which lead to disobedience against the laws of God (Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:28).

The pride of life

Temptation's final category manifests itself in the desire for excess greatness. It boasts in the accomplishments of self rather than God and desires to steal away the glory and credit of the achievements of God.

Isaiah 14:12-14 New International Version (NIV)

*12 How you have fallen from heaven,
morning star, son of the dawn!
You have been cast down to the earth,
you who once laid low the nations!
13 You said in your heart,
“I will ascend to the heavens;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,
on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.
14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.”*

Do these words sound familiar. They are the words of Lucifer as he sought out to lift Himself up to the glory of God Himself. And yet, all too often, we adopt these words as our own.

The great preacher and Bible teacher, Pastor Charles Stanley once said, *“No one enjoys feeling weak, whether it is emotionally, spiritually or physically. There is something within the human spirit that wants to resist the thought of weakness. Many times this is nothing more than our human pride at work. Just as weakness carries a great potential for strength, pride carries an equally great potential for defeat.”*

For the Christian, our strength is discovered and realized in our greatest weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). If we are willing to humble ourselves before God, He promises to lift us up in due time (1 Pet. 5:6). On the contrary, Scripture tells us that arrogance precedes a destruction and haughty attitude comes before a great fall (Prov. 16:18).

Application

Let's wrap things up this morning by looking at the three keys to overcoming every temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 New International Version (NIV)

13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

First, we must recognize the commonplace of our temptation. Remember that every enticement we face is nothing new but is common to every human on planet earth. As a result, we ought not isolate ourselves in some dark corner and attempt to be victorious alone, but instead we should seek out Godly counsel from other believers. Surround yourself with others from the church that will hold you accountable and affirm you in the message of the Gospel.

Second, we have every tool necessary to bear up under the weight of temptation. God is faithful and has given you grace upon grace (John 1:16) which is fully sufficient and capable (2 Cor. 12:9) to keep you standing upright as the waves of temptation crash down upon you. The one who has overcome the world resides inside you and has given you all you need to be overcomers with Him (John 16:33).

Thirdly, with every temptation, God provides an escape hatch. You may think that there is no other option other than to give in to your desires, but that is simply not true. In fact, the idea that there is no other way is a common lie of the devil. God promises that with every temptation He will provide a better way, a more holy way – a way of escape so that you can be victorious through His great provision.

This week, when you are beset with temptation, claim victory through God who gives you the power to be overcomers in Christ.

Prayer

Blessing

2 Corinthians 13:14 New International Version (NIV)

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And together with one voice we proclaim, *Amen.*