

Sin and Temptation

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31 July 2011

Today's topic is "Sin and Temptation."

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; but, a mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. Let's set the tone for today's broadcast with "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

[Music - A Mighty Fortress is Our God]

Part 1

After he was baptized, Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness as recorded in Mathew 4, verses 1 through 11.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

**"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."**

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Ellen White tells what this means to us in chapter 12 of her biography of Christ, The Desire of Ages.¹ Here is some of what she wrote:

Many look on this conflict between Christ and Satan as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults of Satan. The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand. They were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours. With the terrible weight of the sins of the world upon Him, Christ withstood the test upon appetite, upon the love of the world, and upon that love of display which leads to presumption. These were the temptations that overcame Adam and Eve, and that so readily overcome us.

Satan had pointed to Adam's sin as proof that God's law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation.

Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. If that were true, He could not have been placed in Adam's position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to save us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured.

With Christ, as with the holy pair in Eden, appetite was the ground of the first great temptation. Just where the ruin began, the work of our redemption must begin. As by the indulgence of appetite Adam fell, so by the denial of appetite Christ must overcome. "And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

From the time of Adam to that of Christ, self-indulgence had increased the power of the appetites and passions, until they had almost unlimited control. Thus men had become debased and diseased, and of themselves it was impossible for them to overcome. In man's behalf, Christ conquered by enduring the severest test. For our sake He exercised a self-control stronger than hunger or death. And in this first victory were involved other issues that enter into all our conflicts with the powers of darkness.

¹ <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/da/da12.html>

Of all the lessons to be learned from our Lord's first great temptation none is more important than that bearing upon the control of the appetites and passions. In all ages, temptations appealing to the physical nature have been most effectual in corrupting and degrading mankind. Through intemperance, Satan works to destroy the mental and moral powers that God gave to man as a priceless endowment. Thus it becomes impossible for men to appreciate things of eternal worth. Through sensual indulgence, Satan seeks to blot from the soul every trace of likeness to God.

The uncontrolled indulgence and consequent disease and degradation that existed at Christ's first advent will again exist, with intensity of evil, before His second coming. Christ declares that the condition of the world will be as in the days before the Flood, and as in Sodom and Gomorrah. Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart will be evil continually. Upon the very verge of that fearful time we are now living, and to us should come home the lesson of the Saviour's fast. Only by the inexpressible anguish which Christ endured can we estimate the evil of unrestrained indulgence. His example declares that our only hope of eternal life is through bringing the appetites and passions into subjection to the will of God.

In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. "Be of good cheer," He says; "I have overcome the world."

Let him who is struggling against the power of appetite look to the Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. See Him in His agony upon the cross, as He exclaimed, "I thirst." He has endured all that it is possible for us to bear. His victory is ours.

"The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus, "and hath nothing in Me." There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.

And how this is accomplished, Christ has shown us. By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the word of God. Only by the word could He resist temptation. "It is written," He said. And unto us are given "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Every promise in God's word is ours. We are we to live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the

word. All its strength is yours. "Thy word," says the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

[Music - Victory in Jesus]

Part 2

It is not a sin to be tempted. As we heard earlier in this broadcast, Jesus was tempted for forty days and did not sin. It is not a sin unless you give in to the temptation, or TRY to give in to the temptation. In the Sermon on the Mount (recorded in Matthew Chapter 5) Jesus said,

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.” ... “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Satan will tempt you. There is nothing you can do about that. You may be tempted to kill, commit adultery, or any other sin. You have no control over that. It isn't a sin to have these thoughts, unless you cherish them. Jesus said that if you want to kill someone, but don't kill him simply because you lack the courage or opportunity, then you have sinned because you wanted to yield to the temptation.

The good news is that Jesus can give you the power to resist temptation and quickly put those thoughts out of your mind. Paul tells us, in Romans 6,

“If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ... But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

John tells us in 1 John 3, verses 7 through 10,

“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”

We should not have to belabor the point that God gives Christians the power to overcome sin; but we do because we live in a society that doesn't believe that. We live in a society that believes sin is inevitable, so we just have to tolerate it. Tolerance of sin leads to acceptance of sin as normal behavior. Acceptance of sin leads to celebration of sin.

In the past few years, homosexuality has gone from toleration, to acceptance, to celebration. There are now Gay Pride parades in several cities.

Let's be clear about this. Homosexuality is a sin, not because I say it is a sin, but because God says it is a sin. In the very first chapter of his letter to the Romans, Paul said,

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Paul said, “They not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.” On July 14, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill into law mandating the teaching of Gay History in California public schools.² The rationale behind this law is that although history books sometimes mention the fact that some great men were gay, this isn’t enough. Children need to be taught how good it is to practice sexual sins.

History books mention the fact that Hemmingway and Edgar Allen Poe wrote much of their great literature under the influence of alcohol. Why don’t we mandate the teaching of Drunk History in our public schools, too? That would make drunks feel much better about themselves. Don’t drunks deserve the honor and respect that gays get?

But let’s not stop there. Let’s mandate Adultery History in public schools, too. Let’s celebrate all the great men throughout history who had affairs. This would have to be a multi-year course because it would take at least three semesters just to teach about living politicians.

OK. Time to get serious again. We live in a society that would rather celebrate sin than stand up against it. That’s why secular society criticizes anyone who doesn’t celebrate gay pride.

Truth Wins Out, a non-profit lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender advocacy organization, released a report on July 9, 2011, that was widely quoted in the news media. It said, in part,

“John Becker posed as a troubled gay man seeking counseling. During a week-long undercover investigation inside Bachmann & Associates ... Becker attended five sessions with Bachmann & Associates counselor Timothy Wiertzema. His experience with Bachmann & Associates and their counselor Timothy Wiertzema led him to conclude:

“ ‘Based on my experiences at Bachmann & Associates, there can no longer be any doubt that Marcus Bachmann’s state- and federally-funded clinic endorses and practices reparative therapy aimed at changing a gay person’s sexual orientation, despite the fact that such “therapy” is widely discredited by the scientific and medical communities.’ ”³

The secular scientific and medical communities, whoever they are, claim that, “You can’t pray away gay.” Nor, should anyone want to because there’s nothing wrong with being gay in their eyes.

It isn’t surprising to find this attitude in today’s corrupt, secular society. What is really tragic is that it has found its way into some mainstream Protestant denominations. Some churches are proud of the fact that they have ordained openly gay or lesbian ministers. They see their acceptance of sexual deviancy as evidence of their openness and toleration. This separates them from the true body of Christ.

² <http://www.newsypype.com/8569-california-gay-history-bill/>

³ <http://fromtheleft.wordpress.com/2011/07/09/dr-marcus-bachmanns-cure-the-gay-clinic-exposed/>

Jesus didn't tolerate sin. He forgave sin on condition of repentance. Then He gave power to overcome sin. 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Ordaining homosexuals to the ministry sends the opposite message. If ministers can openly and proudly commit sin without condemnation, then anyone can commit any sin without fear of judgment.

This message is what itching ears want to hear. They want to hear that sin cannot, and need not, be overcome. It lulls them into a false sense of security.

If it is true that, "You can't pray away gay," it leads to one of two un-Biblical conclusions. Either no sin can be overcome, or there are certain sins that are just too hard to overcome. Presumably there is a list of sins that God just can't handle, and homosexuality is on that list. What other sins are on that list?

The Bible is clear. God can, and will, forgive any sin that you are truly sorry for. Not only that, He will give you the power to overcome that sin. That's the power God gives Christians. It is power you can have. Churches that ordain homosexuals, and tolerate open sin, don't have that power and can't give it to you.

One Ridgecrest church recently changed its denominational affiliation because it previously belonged to a denomination that ordained openly gay people not only to be priests, but even higher positions in the church hierarchy. It wasn't easy to do. We applaud that congregation for its courageous stand.

If you ever realize that your church has fallen away from the truth, it is your responsibility to follow the example of Martin Luther and attempt to reform that church. If your best efforts fail, you have no choice but to leave it as he did.

The message we really want to leave with you is that Jesus forgives sin, and gives the power to overcome sin. We must stand up to temptation using the word of God just as Jesus did when He was tempted in the wilderness. And, if we fall prey to temptation, He will gently restore us, as He did the Samaritan woman at the well. The story is told in John Chapter 4, but instead of reading it from the Bible, let's close our broadcast by listening to the story as told by Becky Richardson, as she sings, "This Jesus Healed My Soul."

[Music - This Jesus Healed My Soul]