MESSAGE 2 IN “WINNING LIFE’S BATTLES” SERMON SERIES

WINNING THE BATTLE OVER TEMPTATION

I Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

Tonight as we continue with our series on WINNING LIFE’S BATTLES we are going to look at the one battle every human being has to fight and that is THE BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION.

Please open your Bibles to I Corinthians chapter ten. And let’s read verse 10.

I Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

PRAYER

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Illustration: One morning a Christian man prayed this prayer:

Dear Lord, I thank You that I have not spoken any sinful words or done any sinful deeds, or had any sinful thoughts today. But LORD I'm about to get out of bed in a minute and I need all the help You can give me.

TEMPATION is by far the biggest battle we will fight in the Christian life. This is why Jesus taught us in His “model prayer” to pray: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

I battle temptation......you battle temptation.......we all battle temptation. Temptation come at us from so many different directions it is absolutely impossible to avoid it!

And when it comes to battling temptation, you and I can do one of two things: WE CAN EITHER GIVE INTO IT......or....WE CAN GAIN THE VICTORY OVER IT. In tonight’s message we are going to focus on the latter.......we are going to focus on HOW TO WIN THE BATTLE OVER TEMPTATION.

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In this message I would like to answer four important questions about temptation, because I believe the better we understand the nature of temptation the greater advantage we gain in winning our battles over it.
The first question is very simple.......  

I. **What Is TEMPTATION?**

1. The dictionary defines “temptation” as **the act of being enticed or allured**; or **to be seduced to do evil.**

   Harper's Bible Dictionary defines temptation as, “**being tested or lured towards sin.**”

2. I like the way Charles Stanley defines temptation. He says, “**Temptation is an enticement of our natural, God-given desires to go beyond God-given bounds.**”

3. **When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden what was he doing?** He was trying to entice her or lure her into eating the fruit from the forbidden tree.

   **When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, what was he doing?** He was trying to entice Jesus or to lure Jesus into rebelling against His own heavenly Father.

4. **When you and I are “tempted” it means** we are being enticed or lured to disobey GOD, to rebel against GOD, or to violate GOD'S commands and shake our fist in the face of GOD.
5. Now is there a difference between being “tempted” and being “tried?” In other words, is there a difference between a temptation and a trial?

Yes, there is a difference and it primarily has to do with the “goal” or the “objective” of each.

* The goal of a **TRIAL** is to **STRENGTHEN** us.
  The goal of a **TEMPTATION** is to **WEAKEN** us.

* The goal of a **TRIAL** is to **BUILD US UP**.
  The goal of a **TEMPTATION** is to **TEAR US DOWN**.

* The goal of a **TRIAL** is to move us **TOWARD GOD**, while the goal of a **TEMPTATION** is to move us **AWAY** from GOD.

6. Did you ever wonder why we have to even have temptation? I mean, isn't life here on earth hard enough without having to fight with temptations on top of everything else we have to deal with?

And if God truly desires for us to live our lives in way that is pleasing to Him, wouldn't it be a whole lot easier to do that if we didn’t have to battle temptation? That makes sense doesn't it?

7. To answer that, you and I need to change our perspective on temptation. We tend to always view temptation as an “obstacle.” But what if we looked at temptation as an “opportunity?”
You see, temptation is a “test.” It is an opportunity for you and me to prove our love, our devotion, our loyalty, and our obedience to GOD. Temptation provides us with an opportunity to prove our FAITH and TRUST in God to deliver us, as He promises He will.

8. You see, temptation itself is NOT a sin. It is NOT a sin to be tempted to do something you shouldn't do. Temptation only becomes a sin when we give into it.

9. And so every time you are tempted, remind yourself this is an opportunity for me to show God how much I love Him and how much I desire to please Him.

II. What Is The SOURCE of TEMPTATION?

1. The Bible is crystal clear about WHO IS NOT THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION. Turn in your Bibles to………..

James 1:13 (NKJV)  Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”

2. Believe it or not a lot of people want to blame GOD for temptation. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden and God questioned them about it, do you remember Adam’s response?

Genesis 3:12 (NKJV)  Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”
Now, on the surface it sounds as though Adam is blaming Eve, doesn't it? But who is he really blaming? Listen again! “The woman WHOM YOU GAVE TO ME.....”

Basically what Adam is saying is, “God, if you hadn't given me this woman, none of this would have ever happened.” In essence, Adam is blaming God for being the source of the temptation.

3. Understand this: When you and I are tempted, GOD is never, I repeat NEVER the source of the temptation.

GOD allows us to be tempted! GOD permits us to be tempted! But GOD is never, ever the source of any temptation!

4. After telling us in verse 13 that GOD is NOT the source of temptation, James goes on to tell us in verses 14,15 WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF ALL TEMPTATION.

James 1:14,15 (NKJV) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Illustration: A lot of us can remember the black comedian, FLIP WILSON back in the 1970's. One of Wilson's most popular character portrayals was when he dressed up like a sassy, hip woman named GERALDINE. One of Geraldine's favorite lines actually became a national catch phrase and that was: “The devil made me do it.” Any time Geraldine did something wrong her pat answer was: “The devil made me do it.”

5. How many of you understand the devil can't make you and me do anything? You see, as much as we would like to blame the devil as being the source of all our temptations, the truth is every temptation.......EVERY
TEMPTATION starts in our own minds and hearts.

6. Every temptation starts with A THOUGHT......A DESIRE... a SINFUL CRAVING within us. Satan can exploit our sinful thoughts and desires by “baiting the trap” but Satan can never force any of us to yield to temptation.

7. When we yield to temptation we are acting upon our own sinful thoughts and desires. When we yield to temptation we lower the wall of resistance and cross a line GOD has commanded us not to cross.

8. The source of temptation is our own sinful thoughts and desires.

III. What Is The TRUTH About TEMPTATION?

1. Let’s go back to our scripture text I read at the outset of the message in .............

   I Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

2. In this brief verse we see three very important truths we need to know about temptation:
TRUTH #1: YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN YOUR BATTLE WITH TEMPTATION.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.”

When we battle temptation there is such a sense of loneliness like we're the only one who is struggling with that temptation. The truth is you are NOT the only one who struggles with temptation. It is a battle every human being fights.

People in every generation since Adam have battled temptation, including Christ Himself. People from every country, every race, and every language battles temptation.

Every member of your family battles temptation. Every one of your neighbors, everyone of your friends battles temptation. Everyone of your brothers and sisters-in-Christ battles temptation. Your preacher battles temptation.

Each and everyone of us has a particular weakness. The scriptures refer to it as “a besetting sin” or “the sin that so easily entangles us.” What tempts you may not even be a temptation to me. And what tempts me may not even be a temptation to you. But each and everyone of us has at least one area of vulnerability that has caused us to stumble many times.

Are you tempted to LUST? So are a lot of other Christians. Are you tempted to DRINK ALCOHOL?
So are a lot of other Christians. Are you tempted by **GREED**? So are a lot of other Christians? Are you tempted to **GOSSIP**? So are a lot of other Christians? You may think you are the only one who struggles with your particular temptation, but you're not!

You may think the devil works harder on you than he does on anyone else, but that's not true!

You may think no one has failed more miserably when it comes to battling temptation than you, but that's not true either!

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man.”

**TRUTH #2: GOD LIMITS HOW MUCH WE CAN BE TEMPTED.**

but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.

Don't you just love those first four words? “But GOD is FAITHFUL.” God knows our limit! He knows our “load capacity!” He knows our “breaking point.”

And though GOD allows Satan to tempt us, Satan cannot take temptation past the point that GOD permits.

You see, any time we give into temptation we try to rationalize that the temptation reached a point where we could no longer resist and that's why we “caved.” But the truth is, GOD will never allow the temptation
to reach a point where we can't possibly resist, because God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.

**TRUTH #3:** GOD ALWAYS PROVIDES A WAY OF ESCAPE FROM TEMPTATION.

but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

**ILLUSTRATION** - The house Linda and I live in is about 125-130 years old. And because the house has done a lot of settling over all those years, let's just say its not exactly “mouse proof.” Every winter it seems, a few of the disgusting little rodents find their way into our house. So I have about eight traps baited with peanut butter located in various places.

Well one morning last November I found one of those mouse traps turned upside down in the middle of our dining room floor. That mouse tried so desperately to escape that he literally drug the trap about fifteen feet from beside the kitchen stove to the middle of the dining room floor. But when I turned the trap over it was very obvious he had not been successful in making his escape.

When we are tempted we feel “trapped” just like that mouse and feel as though an escape isn't possible. **But GOD promises.......GOD PROMISES** that every time you and I are tempted, He will make a way of escape.

That brings us to our fourth and final question, and that is.....
IV. What Is The SECRET To WINNING The Battle Over TEMPTATION?

1. We have all heard of the three “R’s” of READING, RITING, and RITHMITIC.” Well here are the four “R’s of winning the battle over temptation.”

(A) The first “R” is RECOGNIZE your vulnerability.

1 Corinthians 10:12 (NKJV) Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Remember Peter's bold promise about his undying loyalty to Jesus? Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” Matthew 26:33 (NKJV)

What did Peter do that very night? He denied Jesus three times! He fell just like the others!

Over the years I have heard a number of Christians harshly judge a Christian brother or sister who gave into temptation and failed miserably. I heard them “boast” about how they would never do such a thing. But they did! Within a few months or years they too failed miserably.

One of the keys to winning over temptation is never to become so proud that you think you are beyond failure! RECOGNIZE YOUR VULNERABILITY!
When Jesus took Peter, James and John into the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal and arrest, do you remember what He commanded them to do?  

Luke 22:40b (NKJV)  He said to them,  

“PRAY that you may not enter into TEMPTATION.”

PRAYER is a vital weapon in our battle with temptation! You and I cannot fight that battle by ourselves. We must ask for help!

Again, I remind you of what Jesus taught us to pray in His “model prayer,” He taught us to pray,  

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

If you are really struggling with temptation and you find yourself losing the battle more often than you are winning, REQUEST HELP FROM THE LORD!

James 4:7 (NKJV) Therefore SUBMIT to God. RESIST the devil (and he will do what?) he will flee from you.

One reason why so many Christians are losing the battle over temptation is because they put up little or no resistance at all when they are tempted. Its as though they are convinced they are going to give into the temptation sooner or later, so why fight it!
If you are losing your battle with temptation on a regular basis I would ask you, “Do you try to resist?” “How hard do you try to resist?” Listen carefully! One of the best things you can do to “resist” the devil is to read your Bible each and every day. David said, “Your word I have hid in my heart that I might NOT SIN against GOD.” When you neglect God’s word your ability to resist temptation diminishes drastically.

RECOGNIZE YOUR VULNERABILITY!
REQUEST HELP FROM THE LORD!
RESIST THE DEVIL!

(D) And the fourth “R” is RUN AWAY from temptation as fast as you can!

I Corinthians 6:18 (NKJV) “FLEE sexual immorality!”
I Corinthians 10:14 (NKJV) “FLEE from idolatry!”
II Timothy 2:22 (NKJV) “FLEE also youthful lusts!”

When Potiphar’s wife was trying to seduce Joseph into having an immoral relationship with her, Joseph ran away so fast he literally left Potiphar’s wife holding his robe in her hands.

If you and I want to win the battle over temptation we must run away from it as fast as we can! The longer you think about it......the longer you entertain those sinful thoughts and desires....the greater the possibility you are going to give into the temptation.

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I want to leave you with these words of wisdom from the late Charles Haddon Spurgeon....... 

“What settings are you in when you fall? AVOID THEM!
What props do you have that support your sin? ELIMINATE THEM!
What people are you usually with when you sin? AVOID THEM!

LEARN TO SAY “NO” TO TEMPTATION!