

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

You've heard John 3:16, "*for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.*" Jesus Christ must be your deliverer before you have a defense against temptation. He is your protection and power.

Recall the painting of Jesus knocking on the door of your heart, illustrating receiving Christ as Lord and Savior. He gives you new spiritual life, and indwells you by His Holy Spirit. Martin Luther said, "when the devil comes knocking on the door of my heart and asks 'who lives here?' the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, 'Martin used to live here, but now I live here'." As RK Hughes notes, when Christ fills our lives, Satan and sin have no entrance.

1- Union with Christ: Spiritual union with Christ is by grace through faith, being regenerated by the Holy Spirit to receive and believe Jesus as Lord and Savior. The believer is not only saved from the penalty of sin, but also its power. Because Jesus Christ passed the test outlined in Luke 4, and resisted every temptation His entire life, perfectly fulfilling God's Law.

He not only won salvation for all who believe in Him, but His eternal spiritual life becomes your life, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Scripture says you are in Christ, and Christ is in you. Some 160 times the New Testament speaks of union with Christ as the believer's new reality. And that's how you can resist temptation, the devil, and sin, as James 4 commands.

2- God's Armor: God provides your impenetrable protection against sin. Ephesians 6 says, "*be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God to stand against the schemes of the devil, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil.*" Each piece of God's armor represents the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ is the helmet of salvation, protecting your mind. Christ is the breastplate of righteousness, protecting your heart. He is the belt of truth, protecting your trust. Christ is your shield of faith, protecting against fiery darts of temptation. Each part speaks of Christ as your Deliverer, protecting you from the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which constantly attack.

3- God's protection: In Christ you are never defenseless, you are always protected against temptation. Scripture gives examples of every temptation mankind encounters, through the lives of real people in the Bible. 1Corinthians 10 also connects to Luke 4, because it mentions the occasions that Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy when Israel did not pass their wilderness test.

Despite God in their midst, they desired evil, idolatry, immorality. They tested God, grumbling and resisting His authority through Moses. But they especially rebelled against God's written Word. Verse 11 says, "*these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction. Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*"

It's when you're the most sure about yourself that you're liable to be yielding to sin. Verse 13, "*no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to mankind.*" You're not special. All people face the same sins. "*God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*" God doesn't tempt us, but He does test us. And He always provides the way to resist sin.

4- God's power: He provides you invincible power against sin: the Word of God. His armor is your protection. Not a principle or a proposition, but a living all-powerful person. Christ in you and you in Christ. Your powerful weapon: the written down Word of God. Ephesians 6:17, "*put on the whole armor of God, and take up the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*" You wield it by the power of the Holy Spirit within, invincible power and an undefeatable weapon.

How? Just like Jesus did, full of the Holy Spirit, wielding God's Word. Completely controlled by and obedient to Him. With Scripture directing your heart, mind, will, to be obedient to God's will in all things. The same Holy Spirit and Word of God indwells every believer, if only you will trust and obey and live it by His power. Because Christ conquered sin, and gives new spiritual life.

Galatians 5 says walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh: "*If you live by the Spirit, then keep in step with the Spirit.*" You do that by daily trusting and obeying what God's written-down Word says, by the power of the Holy Spirit within! □