

Temptation and How to Overcome It

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding temptation and the provision for victory that is available through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Duration: 52:08

Scripture: Romans 8:1

Topics: "Temptation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of keeping our focus on Jesus and committing ourselves to Him. He uses the analogy of Peter walking on water to illustrate how we can easily be distracted by the waves and wind of life. The preacher also highlights the need for faith and surrender to the Holy Spirit in order to live a victorious life. He emphasizes that true transformation comes from yielding to the control of the Spirit and allowing Him to work in our lives. The sermon concludes with the reminder that the evidence of a transformed life is seen in the fruit of the Spirit and the practice of a holy life.

Transcript

in Dallas, Texas, January 23rd. Soloist, Mr. Frank Boggs. Message, Dr. Alan Redpath.

Temptation and How to Overcome. Well, Mr. Wagner is making the trick, the nightly trick, over to the piano. Let me say how I have appreciated this week being here with you and with your pastor, working with your musicians, but I want to thank you especially for letting me come because I've gotten a bigger blessing, far bigger blessing, than I've had any part in this week as I've heard the gospel preached by his service.

And as I thought about what I'd like to sing tonight, I think these words express what I'd like to say. I am amazed that God would ever save me, so full of sin, so covered o'er with shame. Make me to walk with him who is above me, cleansed by the power of his redeeming name.

I am amazed that God would ever save me, not but the cross could take away my sin, through faith in Christ's eternal life he gave me. Now he abides forevermore within. I am amazed that God would grant salvation to such as I and all who heed his word.

Eternal life to every land and nation, this is the blessed promise we have heard. I am amazed that not but the cross could take away my sin, through faith in Christ's eternal life he gave me. Now he abides

forevermore.

I was speaking a little while ago at a large Brethren Hall in Dublin, in Ireland. It's a very big hall, and it was once a Church of Ireland church, and was taken over by the Brethren. It has a pulpit, and the pulpit is a way, way up and out.

You feel very isolated when you speak. And that evening, there was a large congregation, and it wasn't that they'd come to hear me, they'd come to hear a man called Sandy MacPherson, who was a well-known organist in Britain, played the organ. And I preached, and after I preached, a fellow came up to me, he did right away down the front there, and he said, well, he said, I've sat right under your nose, and I've enjoyed every bit of it.

Well, I thought he was being a bit personal, but I know what he meant. I want to say that I've enjoyed every bit of it here, your hospitality and your friendship, we all have. And it's been a sheer delight to share with these dear Brethren in the ministry.

And if the Lord permits, it'd be wonderful to see you all again, if not here, certainly in heaven. Well, now I'm going to ask you, if you would please rise to your feet, that we might pray together. Dear Lord, we thank Thee for Thine enabling through the days of this week, for all the tasks of the week in which so many people have taken part, and we thank Thee for the gracious outpouring of Thy Holy Spirit, and we thank Thee that there are many in this church tonight who will never be the same again, and we would give Thee all the praise.

Thou hast done it all. And, dear Lord, we would lovingly commend to Thee this fellowship. We would pray for the pastor and his wife.

We thank Thee for their leadership over so many years. We thank Thee for their vision, and pray that Thou wilt ever give them a double portion of Thy Spirit, that Thou would enable them to minister in the power of the Spirit of God in this place. And, dear Lord, we pray for this country.

We pray for the president. We pray for the many problems that face this nation, this great nation at this time. Especially do we ask for Thy restraining hand upon affairs in Vietnam.

We think of those who are separated from loved ones, even in this church, that Thou wilt guard between them, and Thou wilt graciously protect them. And, if it can please Thee, wilt Thou grant peace in our time, dear Lord? Now, Father, we pray that Thou wilt shut us in with Thyself, and may we see far beyond the messenger to the master, and grant tonight that truth, in all its simplicity, may be made clear in our hearts by Thy Spirit. We ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen. I would like you to turn, please, to Romans chapter 8, the eighth chapter of Romans, reading from verse 1 through verse 13, and you will help me greatly by reading it to me. I take it that you have all access to a New Testament or a Bible, and that you can share with your neighbor.

Romans 8, verse 1 through verse 13. Are you ready? Then go. Thank you.

I want to talk to you this evening, on the last day of this convention, about tomorrow, about something that you will meet tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after, and every day until you go to be with the Lord. I expect that many of you have guessed what it is. I want to speak to you about temptation.

Temptation. There is never a work of the Holy Spirit without there being a counter-attack of the enemy. Never does the Spirit of God move in to bless, but the devil is looking on around the corner, and watching his opportunity to come in and trip us all up.

I once used to pray, at one time in my life, that the Lord Jesus would not lead me into any situation in which the devil wasn't interested. I have stopped praying that now, because that prayer has been answered, as far as I'm concerned. Satan is always interested, it seems, and always on our trail.

The one enemy of the devil is the Spirit of God. It's not you personally he's concerned about, it's Christ in you. It's the Holy Ghost, the great executive of the Godhead on earth.

The one who is appointed by the Father to carry out his eternal purposes, and those purposes are carried out through redeemed men and women who are indwelt and filled by the Spirit of God. Therefore, such a man is obviously a first-class target for the devil, and we're going to have to watch him, and very carefully anticipate his tactics, and be quite sure that we know how to overcome him when he comes upon us. Therefore, let me begin by saying that this word, temptation, has two different meanings.

It means, in the first place, to test without any solicitation to sin. An example of that was given us this morning by Nature's Omnipotent. In Genesis 22, verse 1, the Lord God did test.

The word should be test, Abraham. His faith was tested by his obedience, testing without any solicitation, without any enticement to evil. You get many examples of it in the word.

Luke 8 13, for instance, recursively, the Lord Jesus is explaining to his disciples the meaning of the parable of the sower, and he speaks of seeds that fell upon rocky ground, and these are they which endure for a while, but in the time of temptation, in the time of testing, they fall away. Now, it was temptation of that kind to which James refers in his first chapter of his epistle, when he says, rejoice when you fall into divers temptations. Now, divers temptations are not temptations that you meet under sea level.

Divers temptations are various temptations, manifold temptations. Now, says James, when you go on tumbling into them day after day, and they're bound to come your way, come your way, rejoice! Because those temptations, those testings, are not sent to tip you up. They're sent to prove your weakness, and to drive you to Lord's testing.

That's what they're for, and they come from God. Constant reminders of our own personal weakness, infinite weakness, to enable us to draw fresh upon his strength and upon his power. James does not say rejoice if you fall into them, but when you fall into them.

It's certain. So, when they come your way, these testings, the word is rejoice. Now, I'm not going to anticipate what there might be.

A thousand and one things might come your path. For instance, though, I will just mention one possibility. Have you ever thought what an impoverishment it would be to our lives if every source of irritation was removed from us? Do you meet people every day who nearly drive you around the bend? People you can't stand.

You possibly work next to one. You meet them every day. That's your lot.

There they are, and you don't like them. And those people, really, well, they make you so impatient and so irritable. The pastor thinks sometimes that there are some deacons and elders a bit like that, but they probably think that the pastor is a bit like that.

But that's the sort of thing I mean. We get on each other's nerves. We ought to learn the lesson from an oyster.

Extraordinary creatures. You know, when a source of irritation gets, metaphorically speaking, under the skin of an oyster, or beneath its shell, do you know what it does? It directs the most precious part of its being to that source of irritation, and covers it, and turns the source of irritation into a pearl. That's what the Lord Jesus meant when he spoke about the pearl of great price, which he bought with his own precious blood.

Have you ever tried that treatment? Next time, next time you meet the person who irritates and annoys you, practice love. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling life of Christ, love. You're not expected to like everybody, but you can love them.

I always keep on my prayer list the name of somebody I don't like, and it makes a tremendous difference, because I learn to love them as I pray for them. Well now, that term of temptation or testing comes from the Lord, and all intended to drive us back upon our true center, the Lord Jesus Christ. But this word temptation also means to be tempted with a view to falling into sin, and that temptation comes from the devil.

God tests for our good, Satan tests for our downfall, God tests us to prove us, Satan tempts us to destroy. And James, again, you can look sometime at that first chapter. It's a masterly chapter on the subject, says, let no man when he is tempted say that he is tempted of God.

Of course, that's what we all do say. That's what Adam said, the woman whom thou gavest me. Lord, it's your fault.

We all say that. Lord, why did this happen to me? Why should I have to face it? But, said James, the true source of temptation, the true nature of it, is when a man is drawn away by his own lust, and lust, when it can conceive, bring forth sin, and sin bring forth death. That kind of temptation is external enticement, internal desire.

It reaches us through eye gates and through ear gates, mainly. The external fascination is presented to our mind, and our desire goes after it, is towards it. Now, at that moment, there is no sin.

It is not sin to be tempted. Jesus was tempted. And when that enticement is placed before us, and our mind hooks onto it, there is no sin.

That is only the evidence of the inbred nature which we possess, which can do nothing but sin. An outside enticement finds combustible material inside all too ready to follow it, and the moment when internal desire breaks through all the barriers and lays hold of enticement, that is sin. Have you ever heard people still to each other speaking to each other, and one will say to the other, you know, the other day that thought passed through my mind? Fine, that's the thing, pass it through.

Now, at that moment of temptation, and I don't think I'm speaking theoretical language, I don't think I'm talking theology, I'm talking experience, and I'm absolutely sure that you all know what I'm talking about.

For you all know the intrusion of a fascinating object, and the inner desire that goes out towards it, and you say to yourself, how do I overcome it? Like the apostle Paul at one time, you say, to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. And, I am perfectly certain today that the vast majority of Christian people are not requiring to be soaked in more theology, and understand more doctrine, but they desperately need to know more of the how.

Now, at that moment of temptation, it is tremendously important to remember that no matter how severe the attack may be, and no matter how sudden the onslaught, and no matter what hour of day or night defeat need not happen, there is provision for victory in every crisis, every emergency, every moment, through the Lord Jesus Christ, who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, by his presence in us, by the Holy Ghost. Now, it is this provision that I want to consider with you tonight. It causes us, as this subject, to meet on common ground.

There is no temptation that can ever take you, but is common to man. 1 Corinthians 10 30. So, I lovingly pried open the door of your heart, not so much your mind, your heart, and talked to you heart to heart, man to man, man to woman, about the how of the strategic moment of Christian experience.

So many of us are inclined to be censorious when a Christian fails. We haven't understood that our weak spot may not be somebody else's weak spot, and our strong point may not be somebody else's strong point. And everybody here, facing me, including myself, Satan knows exactly the weak point in our armor.

He knows where to launch the attack. He doesn't need to change his strategy. He's a past master in the arts.

He's been at it for years. He knows, true and true, where your weak point is, where he can get you down, time and time again, with the same besetting sin. And I want to say to you that this convention cannot possibly lead you into some quick experience of victory, some shortcut to the way out, which can only point you to the word of God and to principles.

And I want, quite briefly, I hope, to enumerate four of those principles of victory tonight. The first, the Holy Spirit imparts a new nature to the child of God. 2 Peter 1.4 We are partakers of the divine nature.

Colossians 1 and verse 27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Partakers of the new nature.

Christ in you. The hope of glory. And we receive that new nature at the moment of our new birth.

It is then that the Holy Spirit comes to take up his permanent abode in your heart and mind. 1 Corinthians 12.13 We have all been baptized by one sin into one body. Now, listen carefully.

The Holy Spirit comes to be our second nature, and it is absolutely impossible for him to sin. He cannot sin, and given freedom of action, he will bear in you nothing but good fruit. I wonder if you've been a little puzzled by a verse in the first epistle of John.

Will you look at it a moment? 1 John chapter 3 and verse 9. 1 John 3 9 which says this. Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. Now, I've heard many expositions of this text which have left me unsatisfied.

I've heard people say, well, of course we do sin, and it really means that whosoever is born of God does not continue in the practice of sin habitually. In other words, that lets us off. That means that as we go on, we'll get less likely to sin as the years go by.

We won't, because we are indwelt by an old nature which can do nothing but sin. But we have a second nature which cannot possibly sin, and 1 John 3:9, I suggest to you, simply means this. Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin for his seed.

The very seed, the very life of the Spirit of God remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. And the new nature, born into you, bestowed upon you by a sovereign Lord, cannot possibly sin. Now, it is the seed of God, the Spirit of God which cannot sin, which becomes the means of victory in the life of a Christian.

And that leads me to the second statement I want to make, which is implied by what has been said already. It is this. The old nature continues to exist in the regenerate heart, and the Christian will keep right to the end of his life the old nature which is called the flesh.

Romans 8, which we read together a portion of it, is the great victory chapter of the Bible, and it underlines the conflict which goes on in every Christian's life between the flesh and the Spirit. Did you know that in those verses there are no less than twelve references to the flesh, and twelve references to the Spirit? The life of the spiritual Christian is a life of ceaseless warfare, of ceaseless conflict. But, it can be a life of ceaseless ignorance.

The flesh, the Spirit. The flesh is not simply what we think is bad about ourselves. It is not simply our physical body.

It is our whole being, our self. It is all that we are by nature apart from the Lord Jesus, and Paul has made a great discovery about the flesh when he says in Romans 7 and verse 18, I know that in me that is in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. That's not the language of a carnal Christian, that's the language of a mature man who's made a discovery.

It's one thing to say, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. It's another thing to say, I know. God has revealed this to him, but by experience, I know that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

The new man in Christ, the new man is Christ, in us by the Holy Spirit, and the old man is self without the Lord Jesus. The one, absolutely holy. The other, absolutely sinful.

The flesh is sold to sin. I am carnal, sold unto sin, and that condition is incurable. It is unchanged in the life of a Christian.

Romans 8, 7, the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God. Neither, indeed, can be.

The flesh will never be refined, will never be improved, will never be made Christian or Christianized. It will offer always unyielding opposition to the life of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be improved, it cannot be sanctified.

Therefore, God can only do one thing with it, and that is free it. How he does that, I will show you in a minute. But, listen, it is terribly possible for a Christian to live after the flesh.

Romans 8, 5, they desire after the flesh to mind the things of the flesh. Verse 12, Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh. Verse 13, for if you live after the flesh, ye shall die.

Now, this can have disastrous consequences, and I want to say to you that I don't mind what may be your profession of faith, what may be your statement of doctrine which you assign, if you knowingly and willingly to continue to live, or often and generally, mastered by the old nature, you shall die. The old nature continues to exist in the unregenerate heart. So, then, the Holy Spirit within us, the new nature, has power to overcome the flesh.

Romans 8, 2, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. The basis of that victory was laid at Calvary, and the Holy Spirit has only come into your heart in order to make real in your experience what Christ did for you on the cross. And, at the cross, He not only took away our sins, but He took with Him and nailed to the tree this old self and crucified it.

By His obedience and by His holy life, He triumphed over the flesh. The root of all sin, the root principle of all evil, He conquered it. But, that crucifixion is only carried out in your life by the constant working of the Holy Spirit in answer to your ascent.

It is, therefore, by the Spirit of God that the flesh is kept in subjection. And, if we are not on our guard every moment of every day, that old nature which is so living in us will seek to gain the upper hand, and, left to ourselves for one minute, we shall fail. But, as the yield to the control of the Spirit of God, He deals with it and keeps it in the place of death.

I have in my hand here a pen. Its weight and its nature are unaltered by the fact that I have put it into my hand. It's still exactly the same pen.

If I release my hand, the law of gravity will come into operation, and it will fall in my grace. But, as long as I hold on to that pen, the law of life in my hand overcomes the law of gravity, and the pen is held up. And, therefore, I can use it, and it becomes useful to me when I yield to the Lord Jesus Christ.

My old nature remains unchanged. Sin has the same hold upon it, and, if left to myself, sin would insistently attack. But, the power of the Spirit of God comes in and takes possession, and He ensures that that old life is kept continually in the place of death.

But, the working of the Spirit depends entirely upon the submission of my will to the Lord Jesus. I want to use an illustration that I coined from Dr. Alan Fleet of Columbia Bible College, one of the of the great saints of this country and generation, one of the great giants of our day. He said to him, there was a judge who had before him a prisoner, and the prisoner was on trial for murder.

The evidence was heard, and the jury found him guilty. Having heard the verdict, what does the judge do? Does he shoot him? No. If he did that, he'd be guilty of murder.

The judge does only one thing. He passes sentence of death, and then hands the prisoner over to the executioner to carry out the sentence. When temptation attacks me and you, what do we do? We are responsible before God for one thing, saying, Lord, I have died to that, and I pass the sentence of death upon it, and I hand the temptation over to the Holy Spirit, and He carries out the execution.

Everything depends at that vital moment, maybe at the split second, maybe I have no time to pray, maybe I can only cry, Jesus. Maybe the onslaught is like a flood, and it's impossible for me even to get on my

knees, but I lift my heart to Him, and in so doing, I'm saying to Him, Lord, I have died to that impact, and I hand it over to you, and the Holy Spirit in me carries out the sentence of death. That's how he works, and that is the progressive experience.

Some people would tell us that the old self-life ceases to exist in every group of sin that it acted upon us. There would be no Roman faith in my Bible if that was true. Our life has got to grow constantly in the factor of the fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and up to the very end there will be battle and victory, and there's no victory without a battle.

But, a battle is not a battle with temptation, it's not a battle with sin, it's the fight of faith. So, they hold all my resources in the moment of attack that are available for me in Christ. For my great revered, what wonderful creatures they are, when they set off for my great, they wait.

They wait for one thing, a contrary wind, and when the wind is contrary, they soar. My friends, when everything's against you, and the battle's going hard, it's a wonderful thing to prove that in the Lord Jesus, in all these things, I am more than possible through him to love me. So, that leads me to my last proposition.

To recapitulate, we have received as our regeneration a new nature which cannot be. We shall carry till our dying day an old nature which can do nothing but this. The Holy Spirit within us has power to overcome the flesh.

Importantly, what is our part in the victory? What part do we have to take? Well, firstly, the surrender of our will into the hands of God. Romans 6 30. Heal your members unto God as instruments unto righteousness.

I believe in that situation with which you are faced, and with which I am faced, that God can set me free. For that purpose, the Holy Spirit has come to live in my heart. As long as I cease to resist him, he fills me and delivers me.

But, listen, the moment I cease submitting at that moment, he ceases working. The moment I withdraw my surrender, the moment I cease to yield, at that very moment the Holy Ghost ceases to work. I wonder if that's the reason why you do this.

And that part in the operation of the Spirit of God is not only brought about by my rebellion, but also, much more frequently, by my inherent desire to fight the battle in my own strength. There's something about it that always wants to go back to the old principles to stop hustling and to begin crying. And God intervenes to sanctify, to deliver only when we place ourselves in his hands.

That he alone may get the work. Tell me, my friend, does the Spirit of God lead operations in your life? Is he out of business? Is he not really working in power? Why? You knew him once. You knew him as your Lord and Master.

Why did he stop working? Why did you stop yielding? Did you stop hustling? Did you stop fighting the battle? I wonder. Oh, but you say I haven't enough strength of will to maintain a constant surrender to the Lord Jesus. My friend, to make your will strong isn't your business, it's his.

It is God who worketh in you to will and to do his good works diligently. And the second thing, the first thing is the constant surrender of your will. Constant.

The second thing is faith. The reckoning of faith. Romans 6 11.

Just as you receive Christ for forgiveness by faith, so you receive Christ for victory by faith. By faith, you took forgiveness. By faith, you take victory.

Not by tears, not by prayers, not by striving, not by struggle, all ends in failure. Turn your eyes upon him. Peter, you remember, when he walked on the water, he said, Lord, if it be thou bid me come.

And he didn't suddenly become lighter than the water. He was no different, but he believed God. And as long as he did that, and kept his eyes upon Christ, he triumphed.

But getting his eyes on the wave, and feeling the strength of the wind, down he began to go. Jesus called us out of our boats of sin to walk with him. And, when we come to him, we won't be any different.

But, if you keep your eyes, and gaze, and countenance on Christ, you've conquered. Now, this is what I want to say to you in conclusion. This requires a definite act of faith and commitment, a starting point in the life of victory from which you never turn back.

You accepted pardon for past sins by faith. Have you ever yielded yourself to the control of the Spirit of God, and received deliverance from sins by faith? That's the only foundation on which to live. You made the one transaction.

You could say with absolute assurance, your sins are forgiven. But, has there been a moment in your life when you received from the Lord, by faith, deliverance, victory, power, and you started living on the principle, no more trying, no more struggle, no more effort, by faith, in Christ. And, what is the result of such a life? Well, you see, the result is the fruit of the spirit.

Galatians 5.22, and you can describe those nine words as character. Character, the character of Jesus, reproduced in you by their fruit, ye shall know them. And, my dear friends, the deliverance of the Holy Spirit must, must inevitably result in the practice of a holy life.

Which principle is marked in you? Which life is in control, as you'll listen to me as we finish this service tonight, as you face the battle of the following day, the threat of the Spirit? Are you willing, really, really, to die out to everything but the will of God? Have you paid in the power of the Spirit of God to set you free? Would you take that step of faith and deliverance, just as you took it for forgiveness, will you take it tonight for deliverance, and say in the face, in the midst of all the battle, Thank you, Lord. In that situation, I turn this over to you. We've just paused for a moment for my prayer.

In my heart, I speak to some Christian who has been trying, and struggling, and striving, and yet hasn't somehow stepped into the life of victory and overcoming power. Think of it as you haven't taken the step of faith. You haven't prayed for victory in Christ.

Would you do it tonight? Dare to put your hands upon the promises, dare to look up into the face of the risen Lord, and say, Lord, in that situation, in that that you know is the battleground of my heart, tonight I tend it to Christ by the Infernal Spirit. Lord Jesus, we do trust thee to make truth live in our hearts by the power of thy Spirit, and send us from this place to be more than confident.

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