

THE IMPORTANCE OF OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

(Part Two)

➤ **We are now living in days when we can see the imminent return of the Lord**

➤ **How important more than ever before that we keep our focus on things above**

➤ **The Apostle Paul wrote,**

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetous, which is idolatry.” **(Colossians 3:1-6)**

➤ **Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of being ready and watchful for His return**

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” **(Matthew 24:36-39)**

“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” **(Matthew 24:44)**

➤ **For believers the best is yet to come.**

➤ **The eternal blessings and rewards that we receive as believers far outweigh anything that we may go through in this life, or the sacrifices that we may have to make in our time here in earth.**

➤ **This is why the Apostle Peter wrote,**

In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love.

Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. **(1 Peter 1:6-9)**

➤ **Persevering in our faith has great rewards**

Jesus Himself said,

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”
(Matthew 16:27)

In the book of Revelation we read in relation to our life to come,

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” **(Revelation 21:3-4)**

➤ **Sometimes, particularly in the Western World, life's blessings can take our focus off the One who is the source of all true blessings, God Himself**

➤ **If the Devil can get us consumed with the temporal things of this world and take our focus off God's plan and purpose for our life, our lives will bear little or no eternal fruit**

➤ **Jesus in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower said,**

“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” (Mark 4:18-20)

➤ **We come into this world with nothing and we leave this world with nothing when this body of ours is lowered into the ground in weakness**

➤ **It is therefore only in respect of what we have done in light of eternity that will really matter beyond the grave.**

➤ **The treasures that we have stored up in heaven and the rewards that we will receive from the Lord for our life here on earth**

➤ **This is why Jesus said,**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

➤ **When it is all said and done what really matters at the end of our life here on earth is:**

i) **Have we helped others to get to heaven**

ii) **Have we left a legacy of seeing all our family and children walking in the ways of the Lord**

(As parents have we modelled Christian living in such a way that all of our children end up loving and living for Jesus)

iii) **Did we persevere to the end and remain strong in our faith, and**

iv) **Will we receive eternal rewards for having faithfully and with a loving attitude fulfilled God's plan and purpose for our life here on earth**

➤ **So we must not allow the temporal things of this short life here on earth to take our focus off the eternal things**

➤ **One great preacher put it this way. This life is just a dress rehearsal for the next**

➤ **At the end of His life here on earth the Apostle Paul wrote,**

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8-9)

➤ **The simple fact is that we are all living in those lawless times that Jesus spoke of in relation to the time just prior to His return**

➤ **Jesus said,**

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold, But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:12-13)

➤ **So as believers how important it is that we remain strong in our walk with the Lord and learn to overcome the temptations and distractions that will always come our way in life**

➤ **Because if we can remain strong in our faith many others will enter into their God given destiny and spend an eternity with Jesus because of our life and witness for Him here on earth**

➤ **Last week I shared two important keys to remaining strong in our walk with the Lord**

1. Maintaining an intimate relationship with the Lord (A great key to keeping a soft heart towards God and others and remaining strong in our faith), and

2. Choosing our friends wisely because evil company corrupts good habits

➤ **TODAY I WILL BE LOOKING AT SOME MORE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES THAT CAN HELP US TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION AND TO LEAD A VICTORIOUS AND OVERCOMING LIFE**

➤ **When we look at the great and successful athletes in the world, they too have been disciplined in areas such as what they ate, in their training routine and in making correct lifestyle choices**

- So too, we even more than them as Christians, due to the spiritual war that we are all in, need to live in a disciplined way if we are to fully experience the “exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think life” that God has planned for us as believers
- Today we will be looking at a further four disciplines and keys to leading an overcoming Christian walk as we continue this series of teachings on the importance of overcoming temptation
- Next week I will be concluding this series of teachings on the importance of overcoming temptation with some final disciplines including the importance of putting on the armour of God
- We will now begin looking at today's four disciplines and keys to overcoming temptation

3. We must be careful what we focus on

- King David was a man after God's own heart
- Yet we see how even he was led into making some wrong choices because he was looking at things that he should not have been looking at and because he was at the WRONG place at the WRONG time
- We see this in chapter 11 of the book of 2 Samuel

"It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And *someone* said, "*Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?*" Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "*I am with child.*" (2 Samuel 11:1-5)

- **After hearing of this King David tried to cover up this sin by getting Bathsheba's husband to lie with his wife. When this failed King David organised for Uriah to be killed**

"In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there *were* valiant men. Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And *some* of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war," (2 Samuel 11:14-18)

- **After David repented of what he did after being confronted by the prophet Nathan, "the sword never departed from his house" and even his son Absalom was killed whilst trying to take over from King David**

- **This is why later on in life King David wrote,**
"I will set nothing wicked before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not cling to me." (Psalm 101:3)

- **We must always be careful what we look at and listen to, especially given much of the content that is now on TV and on the internet. The Holy Spirit will always direct us in this area**

- **What we focus on will create desires in our heart (Either godly or ungodly)**

- **In the book of James we see the temptation process**

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

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. 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. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.” (James 1:12-16)

- **This is why spending time with the Lord and living a lifestyle of prayer and worship is so crucial, especially given the days that we are now living in.**

- **When we maintain an intimate walk with the Lord we will have godly desires in our heart. This is a great key to overcoming temptation on a consistent basis**

- **King David wrote,**

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

- **The Apostle Paul emphasised what we should focus on in life,**

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-*meditate on these things.*” (Philippians 4:8)

- **Jesus Himself clearly emphasised the importance of being self controlled in the way that we live our life and in what we look at when He said,**

“If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” (Matthew 18:8-9)

- **Being careful about what we focus on helps us to remain strong in our faith and to avoid many unnecessary temptations that have the potential to draw any person back into old lifestyles and habits**
- **If King David, a man after God’s own heart was able to fall in such a great way to temptation, how we also must be careful about what we focus on**

4. We need to continually quickly take all wrong thoughts captive before they take us captive

- The real battleground is the mind
- The enemy will continually try and put thoughts of temptation and discouragement in our mind
- Our ability to win the battle for the mind is therefore a great key to walking in victory as a believer
- We must learn to quickly take all wrong and ungodly thoughts captive and to replace them with right thoughts that are in line with the Word of God
- If we do not take wrong thoughts captive **THEY WILL TAKE US CAPTIVE AND BECOME STRONGHOLDS IN OUR MIND**
- Thoughts produce actions that lead to habits (Good or Bad) and can influence our attitudes either for the good or for the bad

- **We need to therefore quickly replace all wrong thoughts with right thoughts if we are to continually remain strong in our walk with the Lord**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson was quoted as saying,**
“Sow a thought and you reap an action; Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

- **We must therefore learn to quickly take all wrong thoughts captive before they take us captive. It is crucial that we win the battle for the mind**

5. The importance of continually meditating on and renewing our mind with the Word of God

- Regularly meditating on the Word of God is a great key to growing in Christlike character and being equipped for every good work**
- The Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
- Building our lives on the Word of God helps us to remain strong during the trials of life and when confronted with temptations**
- Continually APPLYING THE WORD OF GOD TO OUR LIVES will keep us strong during the trials of life**
- Jesus Himself said, “Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the **rock**; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24-25)**
- Continually meditating on the Word of God helps us to renew our mind so that we develop Kingdom thinking**

- **The Apostle Paul wrote,** “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **(Romans 12:2)**

- **When we read the bible, the bible reads us**

- **Meditating on the Word of God helps us to stay in the will of God and to receive correction and guidance when we are drifting off track in our walk with the Lord**

- **The writer of Hebrews wrote,** “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” **(Hebrews 4:12)**

- **In James 1:23-25 the Word of God is seen as a means of reflection – a mirror into which we are to look and see ourselves, so that we can heed and accept the Bible’s corrective instruction**

- **James, the Brother of Jesus wrote,**
 “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be **blessed in what he does.**” **(James 1:23-25)**

- **The Bible shows us Christ's likeness so that we may measure our own conduct and character against His and allow God to shape us into Christ's likeness**
- **The Psalmist wrote, "The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130)**
- **Meditating on the Word of God helps us to grow in Godly wisdom and character**
- **Meditating on the Word of God has a cleansing affect upon our lives**
- **In Psalm 119 we read,**

"How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:9-11)
- **Building our lives on the Word of God is therefore a great key to helping us to overcome the many temptations that will come our way in life. Jesus Himself quoted the Word of God when tempted by the devil**

6. The importance of being accountable to other Christians in a local church fellowship

- **The Apostle John wrote,**

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

- **To walk in the light involves having accountability BOTH before God and other believers as we walk in relationship with one another**

- **Being accountable to other believers and being planted in a local bible based, Spirit filled church, is a great key to living an overcoming and victorious Christian life**

- **The Psalmist wrote,**

“Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing. (Psalm 92:13-14)

- **More than ever before being connected to other loving believers is so important as we see the imminent return of the Lord and increasing lawlessness in our world**

- **The writer of Hebrews wrote,** “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)
- **Being connected to other believers also helps us to receive prayer support during times of great temptations and trials**
- **More than ever before we need to be actively loving and encouraging all believers to remain strong in their faith**
- **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
 “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. **Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”** (*Galatians 6:1-2*) (**The law of Christ is to love one another as He loves us**)
- **When connected with other believers we can also receive wisdom from others to help us to make right choices in line with God’s will for our life**
- **In the book of Proverbs we read,**
 “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14)

So in conclusion four more disciplines that can help us to remain strong during times of temptation and focused on what God has called us to do in life are;

- 3. We must be continually careful about what we focus on**
- 4. We need to continually quickly take all wrong thoughts captive before they take us captive**
- 5. We need to continually meditate on and renew our mind with the Word of God,
AND**
- 6. The importance of being accountable to other Christians in a local church fellowship**

GOD HAS SO MUCH IN STORE FOR EVERY BELIEVER'S LIFE. Every one of us can make a great difference in this world for eternity