

Victory Over Temptation

How comforting it is to know that the Lord's Prayer covers every aspect of the Christian life! I have stated many times that if all we had was this small portion of the Bible as given from the lips of Jesus, we would have enough gospel to know how to be saved and how to live victoriously. This prayer includes every facet of a man's physical and spiritual life.

It's no surprise, then, that it includes the phrase "Lead us not into temptation." Jesus knew the difficulties we would face and the temptations that would lure every human being.

The difficulty lies in the misconception many people have—that after their born-again experience, they will no longer have temptations. This misconception represents a point of failure for many spiritual leaders.

Somehow, in our zeal to get men and women to accept Christ as their Savior, we paint such a rosy picture of the Christian life that many new Christians feel there will be no more battles after they have accepted Him. They believe they will no longer be tempted and that all their conflicts will cease following that wonderful experience of regeneration.

We need to warn young converts that even though they have been born again, there will be temptations. We dare not forget that the enemy of our soul is very active and the greater the life of usefulness for God, the greater are the temptations.

We must be on guard. Jesus tells us this very thing in the pattern He gave us for praying. He knew all the perils that would beset us.

We will have temptations as long as we are in our bodies of

flesh and living on Earth, and as long as the enemy of our soul is in the same world! I don't care how deeply spiritual you may be, you will be tempted.

When anyone tells me that he has reached such a spiritual plateau—when he feels he has soared so high spiritually that he no longer has temptations, I just smile to myself and think, You are only kidding yourself!

I will never argue with you concerning your relationship with God or take issue concerning your marvelous spiritual experiences or doubt that you have gone deep into the things of God. But I will dispute any statement you make that you are never tempted.

Even one as spiritual as the apostle Paul, who was among the greatest saints who ever lived, was in constant warfare within himself regarding his own temptations. He was consecrated and surrendered, living for God, or God could not have used him as He did or given to Paul the deep spiritual secrets of His power.

Yet Paul was constantly aware of the temptations of the flesh he battled, temptations you and I also face. Why? Because he was still in the body of flesh, and this flesh is still corruption. It is still mortal. You and I will have temptations as long as there is breath in our mortal bodies, regardless of our depth of spirituality.

Refuse to Yield

The good news is, it is possible to have victory. And the first step in gaining victory over temptation is the realization that temptation in itself is not sin.

The greatest saint living today will be tempted because the devil is still very much alive and because that saint of God lives in a body of flesh, which is corruption. That one will be tempted—he will still encounter the lusts of the flesh—but

temptation itself is no sin. Only when one yields to temptation does it become a sin.

Jesus Himself was tempted in the wilderness, and He could have yielded to the temptations the devil presented. They were no farce. Jesus was as much man in the flesh as though He were not God; but also as much God as though He were not man.

Jesus was tempted by the same devil who tempts you and me, but the temptations were not sins because He did not yield to them. He was as perfect after the temptations of the devil as though He had never been tempted.

All Christians believe that God cannot lead anyone into temptation or into evil under any circumstance. This conclusion is substantiated in James 1:13,14 (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. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

As long as one is still in the body of flesh and as long as this body is still corruption, he must contend with the flesh. The Scripture continues, "Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (v. 15).

When temptation comes to you, don't feel as though you have failed God; don't feel as though you have slipped or lost ground spiritually. The facts are simply these: The more you pray and the more time you spend seeking the Lord, the more sensitive you grow spiritually. As a result, the greater are the trials that confront you and the greater are your temptations.

When I began my ministry in Idaho, I was very young. I smile now when I recall my thoughts after I had finished preaching my fifth sermon.

Walking down the road on my way back to the little room where I was staying, I wondered what more I could preach about. I thought I had exhausted the supply of sermons to be found in the Bible!

Yes, I smile as I remember these thoughts, for since that time, the Holy Spirit has revealed to me many deep truths, and I still have only scratched the surface of the rich teachings in God's Word. Do you know why? I have grown! If you are a healthy Christian and there is Jesus' divine life in you, you will grow and develop spiritually.

The Importance of Surrender

Surrender is the other important step in gaining victory over temptation. Today, I can take you down a dead-end street in a certain town in a certain state where I surrendered everything—body, soul and spirit—to Jesus. Walking there with the tears streaming down my face, for the first time in my life it was none of self and all of Him. When I made that full and complete surrender of everything to Jesus, the Holy Spirit took my empty vessel.

That day was the dawn of the greatest day of my life. I had no real ministry until I walked down that little dead-end road and surrendered everything to Him. And that's all He asks!

But watch it: The greater the yieldedness, the greater the temptations. With that infilling of the Spirit comes a responsibility that is tremendous, and as we continue to advance in spiritual stature, new and powerful temptations await us on the path.

They are there at every turn of the road. There is temptation to work for self-glory; there are temptations for personal honors, distinctions and material gain.

The wonderful truths that I have shared with believers through the years were in the Bible the whole time when I thought I

had exhausted the supply of sermons to be preached. Because I was so young spiritually, I did not see the full depth of meaning in God's Word. I had to grow, and as I grew, the Holy Spirit revealed the deep spiritual truths to me. They were bread to my soul.

I developed. I grew spiritually in exactly the way a baby grows physically when it is given the right food. First comes the milk, and then there follows more substantial food, and finally, the child is eating potatoes and meat. At last one day the youngster sits up by the side of his dad and says: "Daddy, I want steak like you are eating!"

The secret is growth, and the more you pray, the more time you spend reading God's Word, the more effort you put forth in following the teachings of Jesus, the more sensitive you become to the Holy Spirit. As you become more sensitive and spiritual, your prayers become more powerful and effective and the results of your work for God are greater. Consequently, God will use you in a greater measure and you will advance in spiritual things.

As you grow, you also become more susceptible to forms of temptation that simply do not beset Christians at an earlier stage in their spiritual growth.

But the servant who is truly yielded to God is able to walk in victory, no matter how great the temptation, because he is motivated by his desire to please God rather than a desire to indulge his flesh.

In the final analysis, we must never lose sight of the fact that the power manifested through the Spirit-filled life is that of the Holy Spirit, and all fruitfulness stems from this Gift from God, the mighty Third Person of the Trinity, who is faithful to lead those who are yielded to Jesus, every step of the way.

Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-1976) was one of the most well-known

healing evangelists in North America during the 1960s and 1970s. She held regular "miracle services" at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium and at Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh for many years and also produced nearly 500 TV programs for the CBS network. Adapted from Lord, Teach Us to Pray by Kathryn Kuhlman, copyright 1988. Published by The Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation. Used by permission.