

Succumb or Overcome

It's a funny thing about temptation. None of us is immune to it. Wouldn't it be great if we were—if we could just take a pill or get vaccinated against it? Then we could develop an immunity and never fear being tempted again. We could live in total victory in all the areas in which we were previously seduced.

For example, if overeating were our nemesis, we could pop a “gorge” pill. *Voilà!* No food would tempt us again. Valentine's Day could come and go, with chocolate hearts dangling before our eyes to no avail. We would be immune to their subtle aroma and enticing shapes.

But, alas, this is not the case. If Jesus, the perfect Son of God, was tempted in all ways even as we are (see Heb. 2:18; 4:15), what makes us think we should be spared?

Right after He was baptized, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (see Luke 4:1). After 40 days and nights of fasting, He was hungry (v. 2). The devil came to Him at a time when He was physically drained (v. 3) and appealed to all possible areas of weakness—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (see 1 John 2:16). Yet, even when Jesus was tempted, He did not sin.

The question is, why would the Holy Spirit purposely lead Jesus into a situation where He would be tempted?

When I was a teacher, I often administered tests to my students. I never gave them a test, however, without first having taught the lesson and then given ample review and study time. The test was not meant to trip them up, but to cause them to think through the things they had learned and make them aware of how much they had grown in that knowledge. In other words, their level of mastery of the subject was indicated by the results of the test. It was a way of

measuring their progress.

Temptation is a form of test that can be a blessing in disguise. It causes us to be confronted with a circumstance that requires a choice. How we choose reveals the motivations of our hearts and measures our progress in the kingdom.

When Joshua addressed the children of Israel with the choice, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15), their progress was being measured. Would they turn back to the familiar? Or would they move on with the purpose of God for them? They had a choice.

The Scriptures tell us that God will not allow us to be tempted (tested) beyond what we are able to handle (see 1 Cor. 10:13), but with the temptation will make a way out. He provides the way of escape. We are given the choice to succumb or overcome.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the three most vital areas of human existence, He affirmed His loyalty to the Father and to His Word. Time and again, He combated Satan with, "It is written." He resisted and did not yield to the temptation. He was able to overcome. He passed the test. As a result, after facing that grueling season in the wilderness, He was released into ministry.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will lead us into an area where He knows we will be tempted by the devil, just as He did Jesus. He does this for a divine purpose—to expose our weakness, to show us what lies within our innermost being. James makes this process clear: "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" (James 1:13-14).

How can we know what lurks in our hearts—which the Bible tells us are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9-10)—if we are never tested? Often we are blind to

our own shortcomings, and other than a face-to-face talk with the Lord, what can more accurately reveal our true condition than a test?

The Lord is the one who searches and tries our hearts. He will either speak to our hearts during intimate moments with Him, or He will test us by allowing circumstances that expose what lies within. His testing is an act of love and grace—one that allows us to see the problems and repent. Once we do, He creates in us a new heart and makes us more like Him. It's a glorious exchange.

The next time you are being tempted, ask the Lord to reveal the weakness that is subject to the test. Give it to Him and allow His strength to overcome your weakness. Submit yourself to Him, and resist the devil. He will flee from you, for God gives the humble His grace (enabling power) to overcome (see James 4:6-7). You don't have to succumb; you can overcome!

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 7/23/2012

As you pray this week, ask the Lord to do a deep work in your heart to expose and uproot anything in you that hinders your spiritual progress. Thank Him for helping you overcome temptations in your life. Continue to pray protection over Israel, our military, their families and the persecuted church. Lift up our leaders and pray the Lord's will over the upcoming elections. As the world focuses on the Olympics, pray for those laboring for a harvest and ask God for greater victory in His church. Pray that churches will unite in prayer and purpose for the nations of the world and expansion of God's kingdom. James 4:6-7; Josh. 24:15; 2 Chron. 7:14

To enrich your prayer life and learn how to strategically pray with power by using appropriate scriptures, we recommend the following sources by Apostle John Eckhardt: Prayers that Rout Demons, Prayers that Bring Healing, Prayers that Release Heaven on Earth and Prayers that Break Curses. To order any or

all of these click here.