

## Resisting Satan – part 2

**Reading: 1 Peter 5:8-9** “....Resist him, steadfast in the faith....”<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction:**

Satan is a real person – a spiritual being (**Ephesians 6:11-12**). He is not the comical or “rascally” character that is sometimes depicted in cartoons or magazines. He is a liar and a murderer, and has been so from the beginning (**John 8:44**). The effect he has on people’s lives has always been tragic in one way or another (**Genesis 3:1-24; Job 1:6 – 2:8; Acts 5:1-10**). Many a soul has been lost after having fallen into his snare (**2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:26**).

In Part 1 of this topic, we saw that Satan will try and tempt everyone. Not even Jesus was excluded from his attempts (**Luke 4:1-13; Hebrews 4:15**). We also briefly looked at some of the times and circumstances when Satan is likely to try and get us to sin. We saw that;

- he can tempt us when we are feeling discouraged and frustrated.
- he can tempt us when things seem to be going well.
- he will use adverse relationships between people.
- and he will influence people whose lives are characterised by idleness.

As a result, there is never a time for us to be complacent, and so we are exhorted from God’s Word to be “....*watchful....sober....vigilant....diligent.....and careful....*” (**Acts 20:31; 1 Peter 5:8; Titus 3:8; 2 Peter 1:5, 10**).

But how can we possibly stand up to him and resist him? He has been deceiving people from the beginning of time (**Genesis 3:1-6**). He is very experienced in his evil work, and even Jesus said that it is possible for “*..even the elect..*” (*i.e.* Christians) to be deceived (**Matthew 24:24**).

But God has not left us alone to fend for ourselves. We have His promise that He will “.... *never leave you nor forsake you (i.e. “us”)*...” (**Hebrews 13:5b**). He is still in control, and He has provided us with ways to deal with Satan’s advances.

In this lesson, we will look at what the scriptures have to teach us about some of the ways that we can overcome Satan’s power and resist his efforts to tempt us.

## **LESSON**

### **1) If you haven’t done so already, obey the Gospel to be “in Christ”**

The works of the Devil are to get us to sin (**Genesis 3:1-6; Job 1:8-11**), and sin has its consequences – spiritual condemnation and death; separation (alienation) from God (**Romans 6:23a; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12; Colossians 1:21a**). And if we leave the salvation offered by God out of the picture, then Satan will have won, for we all inevitably sin (**Romans 3:23**) – we would all be lost because of Satan’s deceptions and our giving in to temptation (**James 1:13-16**).

But we don’t need to be alone, facing Satan by ourselves. There is One who is more powerful than Satan – the Lord God Himself (**Revelation 20:1-3, 10**). He has destroyed the works of the Devil through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (**Hebrews 2:14-15**). The victory that Satan had over us was that we stood

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<sup>1</sup> Biblical quotes in this lesson are from the New King James Version Bible.

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condemned before God because of our failings. We would fear death because of what would come after it – the judgement (**Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10**). But now that Christ has paid the penalty for our sins (**Isaiah 53:3-6; Romans 5:6-9**), we can stand before God, no longer condemned (**Romans 8:1**), but spiritually clean and pure (**Colossians 1:21-22**). The power that Satan had becomes null and void, having no effect, because for those who are “..in Christ..”, their sins are forgiven (**Ephesians 1:3-8**).

This blessing is available to everyone (**Romans 5:18b**), but each person must do something in order to take advantage of it – each one needs to obey the gospel (**Romans 1:16; Acts 2:37-41; Galatians 3:27**). And once “...in Christ...”, the Lord helps the Christian overcome Satan in the following ways;

- He will never leave us or forsake us – He is always there to help us (**Hebrews 13:5-6**),
- He equips us with “spiritual armour” for both protection and the ability to fight (**Ephesians 6:11-18**),
- He limits the temptations that we are exposed to so that we do not have to face any that are too much for us to handle (**1 Corinthians 10:13**), and,
- He continues to forgive us when we sin (**1 John 1:7-9**).

**Point:** Becoming a Christian is the first step in overcoming Satan and his power.

### 2) Know and use the “Sword” – the Word of God

In **Matthew 4:1-11** we have the first recorded account of Satan tempting Jesus<sup>2</sup>. But in all three of the specific temptations mentioned in this passage<sup>3</sup>, Jesus used the same “weapon” to resist the devil – He used the Word of God<sup>4</sup> (verses **4, 7** and **10** *i.e.* “...it is written...”). Jesus knew what God’s Word said. When Satan tried to tempt Him into doing something wrong, Jesus used His knowledge of the scriptures to determine what He should do. If Satan wanted Him (Jesus) to do something that was wrong according to the Word, then He wouldn’t do it - period. No matter how strong the temptation may have been, He followed the Will of God and resisted the worldly desires of the body. Eventually, Satan gave up trying to tempt Him, and went away “.....until an opportune time....” (**Luke 4:13**) *i.e.* Satan would come back and try again sometime later.

In order for us not to be deceived by the devil, we need to know what is Truth and what is sin. God’s Word is Truth (**John 17:17**), and if we don’t know what God’s Word says, then how will we know what is right and wrong? How will we know whether the things that we desire<sup>5</sup> to do are sinful or righteous?

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<sup>2</sup> Given that Jesus faced all of the same sort of temptations that we face (**Hebrews 4:15; 2:18**), it can be concluded that He faced temptations as a teenager and young man during the years before **Matthew 4**.

<sup>3</sup> The parallel passage in **Luke 4:1-13** suggests that there were more temptations than just the three specifically mentioned. *e.g.*

verse **2** “...being tempted for forty days by the devil...” (emphasis mine - SK)

verse **13** “...when the devil had ended every temptation.....” (emphasis mine - SK)

<sup>4</sup> The apostle Paul refers to the Word of God as our spiritual sword (**Ephesians 6:17**).

<sup>5</sup> Not all desires are sinful – *e.g.* **Luke 22:15; 1 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 6:11**.

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Therefore, we need to spend time with the Word. Paul encouraged Timothy to “..give attention to reading.....to doctrine...” (1 Timothy 4:13). Why? “...for in doing so you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:16). The Psalmist wrote this in Psalm 1:1-2;

*“Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.”*

Knowing and understanding God’s Word will take time – it’s a life-long process for the Christian. But we must make the time available to spend with His Word so that we know “...what is acceptable to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:10).

But simply knowing what the Word says is not enough. With that knowledge must also be come discipline and self-control; a desire to hold fast to what God says, no matter how much we may be enticed by temptation. When the devil tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, Eve knew what God had said about not eating from “...the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...” (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2-3). She even quoted to Satan what God had said<sup>6</sup>. But in spite of her knowledge of God’s Word, she still allowed Satan to deceive her. She allowed her worldly desires to control her actions – she ate the fruit of the tree, and was punished because of it (Genesis 3:6, 16).

**Point:** We can resist Satan by using our knowledge of God’s Word. But with that knowledge must come a disciplined commitment to follow it, apply it, and live by it (1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Peter 1:5-6).

### 3) Allow His Word to work on your heart<sup>7</sup>

By and large, we do what our hearts’ desire – *i.e.* our hearts quite often drive our actions (Proverbs 23:7a). Therefore, it is important that our hearts are “in tune” with the Word of God. In Proverbs 4:23 we read;

*“Keep your heart with all diligence,  
For out of it spring the issues of life.”*

If our heart is focussed on some elements of worldliness (*e.g.* Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:8), then we are giving Satan a head start. For when a conflict arises between resisting worldly temptation and submitting to it, we will already be part-way down the track to submitting to it, because that is the direction of our disposition. Our determination to remain faithful to what is right will be diminished; it won’t be what it could be, making it easier for Satan.

- it is always easier to do the things that our hearts want to do, than it is to do the things that we don’t really want to do.

Therefore, a worldly heart needs to change in order to resist Satan.

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<sup>6</sup> She quoted what God had said, but also added “..nor shall you touch it...” (Genesis 3:3b). Nevertheless, she knew that God did not want her to eat the fruit of the tree.

<sup>7</sup> By “heart”, I am not referring to the physical heart that pumps blood through our body. Rather, I am referring to our minds; our attitudes; our motives, *e.g.* Matthew 5:8; Acts 8:37; Ephesians 3:17.

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In the previous section of this lesson, we saw the importance of knowing and doing God's Word. But just as important as these two things, our thinking needs to change as well (**Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23**).

In **Hebrews 4:12** we read;

*“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.”*

God's Word goes right to the very core of our being. When we meditate on what the Word says, and make an honest examination of our own lives, we will see the areas in our lives that need to be changed. Not only is it just some of our actions that need changing. Quite often it is our thoughts and attitudes that we need to work on as well. For example, if we tend to be a bit unforgiving of others, then passages such as **Ephesians 4:32** (“...forgive one another, even as Christ in God forgave you..”) prompt us to consider how Christ has forgiven us of all those shameful things that we have done, and how petty we can be sometimes towards those who sin against us.

Submission to Christ (**James 4:7a**) involves surrendering our own (worldly) desires, and taking on the mind of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5**). To do this, we need to allow God's Word to permeate and influence our hearts and minds until it controls our thoughts (**2 Corinthians 10:5b**), our motives (**Romans 10:1**), and our actions (**Hebrews 11:7**).

**Point:** When we allow our hearts to be moulded and shaped by the Word, worldly desires will be reduced, making them less attractive for Satan to use against us.

### **4) Encourage, and be encouraged, to love and good works**

We saw in Part 1 of this topic that idleness provides an opportunity for the devil (**1 Timothy 5:13-14**). We also saw that God expects us to be active people<sup>8</sup>. He has prepared works<sup>9</sup> for us to do (**Ephesians 2:10**), and we are to use whatever talents we have in doing those works of righteousness (**Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Timothy 6:11**).

But sometimes we can get weary, forgetful, or lose our focus, and drift back to worldliness. So we are taught in God's Word to constantly encourage one another<sup>10</sup>. It is important that, as much as possible, we place ourselves in an environment where we can be encouraged to be actively doing those things approved by God. One of the reasons for Christians to be in contact with each other regularly is to “...consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...” (**Hebrews 10:24**)<sup>11</sup>. In other words, we are to make a conscious effort

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<sup>8</sup> See “Resisting Satan - part “1, page 4, section 5) “He will tempt us when we are idle, bored”, first paragraph.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the things that need doing in this physical world – helping and taking care of one another, edifying one another, reaching out and teaching the lost (**Matthew 25:35-36; Romans 12:6-13; Ephesians 4:11-16**).

<sup>10</sup> **Hebrews 3:13** “...exhort one another daily...”

<sup>11</sup> Just as importantly, we need to remember that the wrong type of company can have a negative influence on us (**1 Corinthians 15:33**).

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to be together, to think about each other, to be encouraged, and to encourage others to “*hang in there*”; to “*hold fast*”; to not “*give up*”. Paul was often encouraging the Christians in the first century to be “*fruitful in every good work...*” (**Colossians 1:10**), “*...always abounding in the work of the Lord...*” (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). Notice the warning in **Hebrews 3:13**;

“*...exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin..*”

*i.e.* without encouragement, the opportunity is there for sin to deceive us and harden our hearts against the truth.

**Point:** Encourage others, and allow yourself to be encouraged, to be engaged in good works. Don’t let Satan or the world suggest to you that it’s “*...not worth it..*” (**Romans 8:18**; **Galatians 6:9-10**; **2 Timothy 4:8**). Don’t give up.

### **Conclusion:**

As Christians, we are to walk “*...worthy of the calling...*” (**Ephesians 4:1**; **5:8**; **1 Thessalonians 2:11-12**). Because of what God has done for us, we are “*debtors, ...to live not according to the flesh...but by the Spirit*” (**Romans 8:12-14**). The things that I have mentioned above are not the full scope of what is available to us in resisting Satan. I mentioned earlier that God has promised to “*...never leave you (us) nor forsake you (us)...*” (**Hebrews 13:5b**). He has provided us with spiritual armour (**Ephesians 6:12-17**). He has given us His Word to teach us right from wrong (**Acts 20:32**). He has provided us with brethren to help and encourage us (**1 Thessalonians 5:11**). He is in control (**1 Corinthians 10:13**), and He gives us the avenue of prayer to communicate with Him (**Ephesians 6:18a**; **Philippians 4:6-7**).

But we have to do our part. Overcoming Satan will require us to be watchful (**Ephesians 6:18**), disciplined (**1 Corinthians 9:27**), and self-controlled (**2 Peter 1:5-6**). There is no “easy option”. Paul’s statement, “*I have fought the good fight*” (**2 Timothy 4:7**), implies that living faithfully will involve a struggle at times. It is a battle that each one of us will have to endure. But at the end of it, there is a crown that awaits “*...all those who have loved His appearing.*” (**2 Timothy 4:8**).

Finally, when you are tempted to sin, let me ask you to consider this thought. Jesus loves you (**Romans 8:35**). He loves you so much that He was prepared to leave the glory and majesty of Heaven; come and live as a man on the earth; be rejected by His own countrymen; and to be beaten, whipped, and nailed to a cross (**Philippians 2:6-8**) so that you can have forgiveness (**Colossians 1:22**). In return, He wants you to love Him by living your life in accordance with His Word (**John 14:15**; **1 John 5:2-3**).

When you truly love someone, you want to do those things that please them - you don’t want to do those things that cause them to be offended, or embarrassed, or grieved. So when you are tempted to sin, consider what God has done for you; consider what He continues to do for you; consider what He has promised for you in the future, and ask yourself, “*how should I respond?*”