

# Overcoming Temptation

by Chuck Smith

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*To overcome temptation, we must know the word of God thoroughly, consider the ultimate results of yielding to sin, and listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 34:19

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:11, Romans 5:17, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 4:15, James 1:2-8

**Topics:** "Temptation", "Spiritual Victory"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the topic of temptation, exploring how Jesus overcame temptations from Satan using the Scriptures and emphasizing the importance of knowing God's Word, considering the consequences of yielding to sin, seeking Jesus' help, and listening to the Holy Spirit. It highlights the ultimate consequences of yielding to sin versus overcoming temptation through faith in Jesus, who offers life abundantly. The message encourages believers to stand strong against temptation and find victory through Christ.

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## Transcript

Rodrigo plays the guitar. There are some people say, well, I play the guitar. Well, no, they strum it.

He plays it, and beautiful, beautiful music. So, in loving it. Let's turn in our Bibles to the book of James, chapter 1. Our scripture reading today will be the first 15 verses of chapter 1 of the book of James.

I'll read the first and the outnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses, and shall we stand as we read God's Word. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, not wavering, for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted. But the rich in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun no sooner is risen with the burning heat, but it withereth, the grass and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth.

So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say that when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, and neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. And then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.

And sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Let's pray. Father, we pray that you'll help us today to come to an understanding of temptation, because, Lord, it's something that we all face.

But, Lord, we pray that you'll give us, really, victory. Victory over the temptations of the enemy, Lord, to turn aside from your path and from your ways. So open now our hearts.

Help us, Lord, to be very teachable, and just give to us, Lord, understanding in this area of our lives. And we thank you for it. Amen.

You may be seated. Well, we have crossed the threshold, and we've come into the New Testament, the book of Matthew, this week, chapters 1 through 4. Because of the fact that we will be going over to the Anaheim Stadium this evening with the Greg Lurie's outreach there. If you come to the church, forget that we're not going to be here.

Don't panic. We haven't been raptured. But we're over there at Anaheim for this outreach, and we just want to be in prayer for it.

Looking forward to what the Lord is going to do tonight, in and through this outreach there in Anaheim. So keep it in prayer, and if you can, we encourage you to go over and attend. And if not, you can watch it on television or listen to it on the radio.

And it should be a great, great evening, and just something that we're looking forward to. Let's turn to the fourth chapter of Matthew, verse 1, for our Scripture today. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Temptation is a problem that we all have to deal with. It is Satan's chief weapon to lure you away from God's perfect plan and will for your life. To yield to temptation can alienate you from your fellowship with God.

And all of us at times are exposed to and oftentimes yield to temptation. Temptation always involves putting my fleshly desires over the desires of God for my life, doing what pleases me more than what pleases God. Temptation usually offers immediate gratification and happiness, but the end result is always emptiness and misery.

The reasonable man will always stop and ask the question, if I do this, what are possible consequences of my doing it? God calls on us to reason things out, think it through. Does it really make sense, or is there no sense, which is in reality nonsense? God said in Isaiah 118, Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, you can be as white as snow.

And God is asking you to be reasoned, think it through. In Romans 12 11, the Lord said, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. It makes sense to offer yourself unto God, it's reasonable service.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3 15, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Be able to give to people an answer, give them the reasons why you have your hope in Jesus Christ. The problem with temptation began very early in the biblical story of man.

God had placed Adam and Eve in a perfect environment, the Garden of Eden. There was no air pollution, no water pollution, even no thorns to be pricked by. I've read that thorns are undeveloped blossoms.

If that is true, and in the kingdom age the curse of sin will be removed, it would mean that every thorn would blossom out. Can you imagine how beautiful the desert would be if every thorn became a blossom? The saguaro cactus, oh my, how beautiful it would be if each one of those thorns were a beautiful blossom. And so the Bible prophesies that the desert will blossom as a rose and surely it will be beautiful to see the desert when every thorn has become a blossom.

You could not really imagine a better environment than Adam and Eve enjoyed there in the Garden of Eden. Every need was abundantly provided for. There was an abundance of exotic fruit and vegetables.

There was a perfect climate. There were no fear of animals for they were all as household pets. And above all, there was this open communion with God.

There was only one no-no, and that was the tree, the fruit of the tree that was in the midst of the garden. And God told Adam and Eve that that fruit was deadly. They were not to eat of it, for if they did, they would surely die.

Now enter into the garden Satan in the form of a serpent or a dragon. And remember, Adam and Eve had no fear of animals or beasts. And so perhaps floating in the air because a part of the curse for the dragon was that it would have to be on the ground, but floating through the air.

And of course, where did the Chinese get this idea of dragons? And you know, as they're sort of have an illusion of floating through the air, and they believe that it goes back to the Garden of Eden. But Satan was pointing out to them the fruit that God said you're not to eat of it, and suggesting that God wasn't really fair to them, that he was holding back something that was desirable, and something that was very, very good. There are usual aspects to temptation.

In appearance, it's beautiful. The lust of the eye is attractive. It looks extremely delicious, mouthwatering good, the lust of the flesh.

And it will make you like God. The pride of life. The Apostle John wrote, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father, but it is of this world.

Look at our world today, and we see the ugliness that sin has brought into the world. The tragic consequences to Adam and Eve's yielding to the temptation to eat of that fruit. All of the evil that rises from man being ruled by his flesh.

As we read in Romans 5:12, for by one man's sin entered the world, and death by sin, so that death passed unto all men for all sin. And then look at the sorrow and the pain that has plagued the human race as the result of Adam and Eve's sin. None of us escapes the sorrow.

Sooner or later, we will all experience death. All because one man yielded to the temptation. So many times when we're tempted, we think, well, if I yield to the temptation, it's only going to affect me.

It's not going to harm others. I'm the only one that's going to suffer for it. But that's wrong.

It usually has a domino effect, so that it does affect you. Yes, but it always involves others too, who are affected by it. Here's a man married to the wife of his youth.

He has a beautiful family, and lovely children. But somehow, the euphoria of first love has worn off in the marriage. And the true love is now there, that binding love that holds them together.

But at work, well, there's this attractive young gal who is smiling at him and makes conversation with him. And he invites her to go out to a coffee break and so forth. And they begin to meet regularly, drink coffee together, and talk and converse.

And he begins to imagine himself in love with this beautiful young secretary. And he finds himself in bed with her. And then he hears that she is pregnant.

And now he is living in a hell. Because he has a wife and children at home. And he has that love for them.

But he is actually caught up in this relationship. And he's torn between the two. And he is living in a proverbial hell, because of his mixed emotions, the desires to be with his wife and family, and yet the pressure of actually taking care of this young girl that he is impregnated.

And so it's a living torment, a hell that he is in. Twice we are told in the book of Proverbs, there is a way that seems right to man, but the end of that is death. Yielding to temptation will always bring ultimate sorrow.

How quickly a person who yields to temptation becomes a victim and a slave of sin. In our text, we find that Jesus is tempted by the devil. He had not been eating for 40 days, he'd been fasting, and he is now hungry.

They say that when a person does go on a fast, that after eight days, you will usually lose your appetite. And then you can go for several days without even being hungry. But once you get hungry again, after having lost your appetite, they say it is important that you eat, because you are now beginning to starve to death.

Your body is feeding on itself, and it won't last long unless you get some nourishment and some food into your stomach. And so I've never fasted that long, and I don't know, but that's what they tell me. And so I'll take their word for it.

I don't think I want to prove it. But the fact that Jesus is now hungry after the 40 days of fasting would indicate that he is now beginning to starve to death. And this is when Satan comes to tempt him.

And the temptation was turn that stone into bread, you know, and use your divine powers to actually curry to your flesh and use it for your fleshly purposes. And, you know, it's really a typical temptation of Satan. If

God has gifted you with certain gifts, why not use them for your own benefit? Use them really to use on yourself, rather than to glorify God.

And enrich yourself as a result of the talents or abilities that God has given you. And so many people do prostitute the gifts of God that are given to them to use them for their own glory and for their own enrichment. You think about Hollywood and all of those talented people there, how that they are using their talent, God-given talents, really for their own glory and for themselves.

Or unfortunately, many times there are evangelists, TV evangelists who do the same thing. So the temptation of Satan was appealing to the lust of their flesh. The second temptation that the devil gave to Jesus was he took him to the pinnacle of the temple.

And there in Jerusalem, he suggests that since he was the Son of God, he should jump from the pinnacle of the temple. Imagine what, you know, a sensation you will be. Everybody will come running up expecting you to be crushed and broken, but you stand up and there's no problem and you'll suddenly have the ears and the minds and the hearts of all of the people as they'll be worshipping you as God and all.

And so he is actually quoting scripture to Jesus. He said, you know, the scripture says he will give his angels charge over you. They'll keep you in all of your ways.

They'll bear you up lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone. And so using, again, your supernatural powers and using them to baffle and amaze people and to draw attention to yourself. I think of the professional actors and actresses and athletes who are seeking to become idols before the people in order to be worshipped by the crowds.

I watch, I love watching football on television and I notice how that so often when a fellow will make a spectacular catch or whatever, he will really do his little dance, his little parade there in the end zone and drawing the attention of the crowd and just, you know, feeding off of the cheers and all of the crowd that is there. And just how that, it seems like we desire that kind of worship and that kind of adulation from the crowd. And that is the temptation that is referred to as the pride of life, the desire for the applause of the people.

In the third temptation, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain. He showed him the kingdoms of the world and he promised Jesus, if you will bow down and worship me, I will give to you these kingdoms for they are mine and I can give them to whomever I wish. Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim but acknowledged that it was a legitimate claim, that the world did belong to him at the present time, but he came to redeem the world so that it would become God's once again.

But the price was his life. It was a awful price that he had to pay to redeem the world from the power of Satan. But he was willing to pay that price.

Now, Satan is offering him, look, you don't have to pay the price. If you'll just bow down and worship me, I'll give it to you. And you don't have to go to the cross.

You don't have to go God's way. You can shortcut God's plan and you can have it now. Just bow down and worship me.

And so many times, Satan is offering immediate fulfillment, immediate pleasure. You don't have to take God's way. You don't have to go God's path.

I'll give it to you now. Just worship me and you can have it now. God's path is too hard.

My path is easy, Satan says. Just bow down and worship me and all of the glory will be yours. It's important to note how Jesus overcame the temptations.

In every case, he used the scriptures. When Satan would offer him these things, he would say, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the father. It is written.

And all we see answered the temptation with the word of God and the scriptures. And that shows us how important it is to get the word of God deeply and ground in our hearts and in our minds so that when Satan does come, we'll be able to resist the temptation, having the strength of God's word at our disposal. In Psalm 119, David said, thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

Again, in Psalm 119, how can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed to your word. Knowing the word of God is the first line of defense against temptation. Jesus knows how powerful temptation can be.

We read in Hebrews 4:15, for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our feeling of weakness, but he was in all points tempted like we are, and yet without sin. And thus we can call upon him in the hour of temptation because he understands what we're going through. We saw the horrible consequence of Adam yielding to the temptation and bringing into the world death, but we need to look at the ultimate consequences of Jesus overcoming the temptation, and he brings to us life by trusting and believing in him.

So we see the wonderful benefits of what Jesus has done for us. He said, I've come that you might have life, and that more abundantly. Paul wrote in Romans 5:17, for if by one man's offense, that is Adam's, death reigned over all, how much more shall they who have received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life by one, even Jesus Christ.

So one man's yielding to temptation brought death and misery to all of mankind, and so also by one man's victory over temptation, he has brought life to all who will identify with him and believe in him. To overcome temptation, you must, first of all, know the word of God thoroughly. Study the Bible.

Fill your heart with the word of God. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. Two, consider the ultimate results of yielding to sin.

Look what it, the consequences in your life if you yield, and then ask Jesus three to help you and to give you strength, because he understands what it's about. And then finally, listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit, who is warning you against doing it. He is there to say, no, don't take that path.

You can have only one of two possible results, death or life. Listen to Satan, and you'll be related to Adam in death. Listen to the Holy Spirit, and you'll be related to Christ in life.

Temptation, oh yeah, we all know what that's about, but the problem or the issue is, am I yielding to the temptation or am I standing strong against it through his help and through the power that he gives to me? Have I turned to him in the time of temptation and found that he is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that I could ever do for myself, for he can give me victory over the temptations when I put my trust, confidence, and faith in him. Father, we thank you for the victory that we can and do experience over the temptations of the enemy. And Lord, we pray that you'll help us, that we might, oh Lord, just really stand in

that victory that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Lord, bless, we pray. Guide us, Lord, and use us as your instruments, and may we, Lord, bring glory to you through living a life that is pleasing to you. And may that, Lord, be the primary purpose of our life, to just bring glory and praise to your name by living as you would have us to live, victorious over the temptations of the enemy that would destroy us if we would yield.

So, Lord, bless your people. Lord, there are those today that are going through some temptations, those who are really sort of teetering, and they are being drawn, Lord, away from you by the enemy holding out promises, empty promises, that he can't fulfill and yet are deceptive and they're being deceived, Lord, and are succumbing to the temptations. Lord, help them.

Give them victory, Lord. Give them the power of your Holy Spirit to resist and to stand strong. Lord, there's some of them that are in that miserable place of condemnation, knowing what they are doing is wrong, and yet, Lord, are seemingly held by the power of this experience and not able to free themselves.

But, Lord, you can set them free. We ask that you would do that and help them, Lord, to be freed from the power of darkness and the temptation that is holding them as a captive and in obedience to the enemy. Lord, help in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today. If you are going through a temptation and if maybe you have even succumbed to that temptation and you've gone that next step, you find yourself sort of in this trap and you just can't see your way out, the Lord can make a way and will make a way if you'll just give him the opportunity to do so.

So we would encourage you, as we're dismissed, come on forward and just ask these fellows, pray for me. I'm going through a heavy experience and I need the Lord's help, and where two or three of you on earth is touching anything, the Bible said it will be done. And so God will help you today and God will deliver you today if you'll just give him but the opportunity to do so.

And so may you be set free today. May you go from this place delivered and set free by the power of God's Holy Spirit and free to serve him and just freed from that miserable condition of doing what you know you shouldn't do but not being able to do anything about it. May you experience his help and just be freed from that power of darkness holding you today.

So God bless you and be with you, strengthen you, cause you to abound in all things in Christ, living a life of victory over the power of sin and over the power of darkness that would hold you as a slave if you submit and yield to it. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

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