

Jason and the Sirens -- Victory in Temptation

by Daniel Steele

The secret to overcoming temptation and living a victorious Christian life is to let the joy of the Holy Ghost in the heart surpass all the pleasures of sense.

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 16:11, John 15:11, Romans 12:2, Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 4:4, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Temptation", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the inevitability of facing temptations as long as we are in this world, emphasizing the need for believers to triumph over temptations by renovating their desires and finding joy in spiritual delights that surpass earthly pleasures. He compares the two ways of resisting temptation to the stories of Ulysses and Jason encountering the Sirens, highlighting the importance of joy from the Holy Spirit as the ultimate shield against sin. Steele stresses the significance of fullness of joy in a believer's life, pointing out that true joy comes from God and is essential for maintaining faithfulness and resisting the devil. He encourages young converts to swiftly move into a realm of unutterable gladness in Jesus, where consecration, trust, sanctification, and the abiding fullness of the Spirit dwell.

Transcript

It is a great mistake to suppose that there is any state of grace this side of glory which puts an individual where he is entirely exempt from temptation. So long as the soul is in probation it will be tested by solicitations to sin. But there is a state in which we may, with St. Paul, always triumph. There are two different ways of resisting temptation, one of which sometimes successful, and the other is infallible.

The first method is by the direct antagonism of sin through the exercise of the will-power. If this power is strong, victory ensues; but if it be weak, defeat follows. The other method is in the indirect resistance of temptation by the complete renovation of our own desires and pleasures. For the chief power of temptations in our own hearts, in our appetency for sinful delights. The extinction of that appetency breaks the power of every solicitation to moral evil. But since we are created with the desire for happiness imbedded in our very natures, the downward gravitation of our souls towards sinful pleasures can be overcome only by bringing heaven so near by faith as to cause a superior upward gravitation, by what Dr. Chalmers vigorously styles "the expulsive power of a new affection." Hence, the love of God fully shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, works a thorough revolution in our delights. Spiritual joys have now become far more appetizing than earthly delights.

"Temptation lose their power,

When Thou art nigh."

The period of Christian life before this new taste for spiritual joys has become completely dominant and controlling is the period of greatest peril. It was before a relish for the manna had become ineradicably fixed in the Israelites that they "fell a-lusting" for the flesh pots of Egypt, and visions of "leeks, and onions, and garlic," made their mouths water from intense longing. During the critical period in which Jehovah was attempting the transformation of this servile gang of brick-makers into a nation of free men, they fell before the power of their uneradicated Egyptian appetites. Let every unsatisfied Christian remember that these things are written as an ensample of the shipwreck to which he is especially exposed. In the perilous hour of trial his will-power may bow like a reed before the impetuous torrents of fleshly desires, and he became a castaway. The only safety is in the opening of a new fountain of joys within the heart, so sweet, so full and so lasting as to extinguish utterly all base delights. Let me illustrate. In the days of our boyhood, when a barrel of cider in the cellar of the farmer was deemed a necessary of life, one of our neighbors complained that, in consequence of the bibulous propensity of some one in his house, he could keep no cider in his cellar. A friend well versed in human nature suggested Franklin's remedy as a sure cure of the evil. The complaining farmer was told that his cider would remain untouched if he would place a barrel of wine beside it. Here see an unfailing prescription for the soul prone toward the shallow, green-scummed pools of sensual gratification. Let him by faith place nearer to his heart the wine of God, the joy of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, having tasted which, he will never thirst again for worldly pleasures.

A classical illustration of the two ways of resisting temptation is found among the beautiful myths that the cloud the dawn of Grecian history. In the wanderings of Ulysses after the taking of Troy, the wind drove his ship near to the island of the Sirens, somewhere near the west coast of Italy. These enchantresses were fabled to have the power of charming by their songs any one who heard them, so that he died in an ecstasy of delight. When the ship of Ulysses approached these deadly charmers, sitting on the lovely beach endeavoring to lure him and his crew to destruction, he filled the ears of his companions with wax, and with a rope tied himself to the mast, until he was so far off that he could no longer hear their song. By this painful process they escaped.

But when the Argonauts, in pursuit of the golden fleece, passed by the Sirens singing with entrancing sweetness, Jason, instead of binding himself to the mast and stuffing the ears of his men with wax, commanded Orpheus, who was on board the ship, to strike his lyre. His song so surpassed in sweetness that of the charmers, that their music seemed harsh discord. The Sirens, seeing them sail by unmoved, threw themselves into the sea and were metamorphosed into rocks. They had been conquered with their own weapons. Melody has surpassed melody. Here is set forth the secret of the Christian's triumph. Joy must conquer joy. The joy of the Holy Ghost in the heart must surpass all the pleasures of sense. When all heaven is warbling in the believer's ear, the whispers of the tempter grate upon the purified sensibilities as saw-filing rasps the nerves.

"The joy of the Lord is our strength" to resist sin as well as to ensure toil. Fullness of joy is the Christian's impervious shield. Christ has such a shield for every believer. "Ask and receive, that your joy may be full." Some people, by affecting contempt for joy, proclaim themselves wiser than the Master. The truth is that no soul is entrenched in its bomb-proof till it is filled with God, with love, with joy. For these three are a trinity in unity. Every soul having the fullness of God has the fullness of joy; not always the gladness of realization, ecstatic and rapturous, but "the joy of faith" -- a high serene tranquillity often bursting out into

exultation because of the gladsome emotions actually realized. The kingdom of God is not fully set up in the soul till the joy of the Holy Ghost crowns both righteousness, or justification, and peace. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). Hence, every young convert should be urged to advance immediately and rapidly beyond the point of irksomeness of service, into the region of unutterable gladness in Jesus. This is the region of perfect consecration full trust, entire sanctification, and the fullness of the Spirit abiding within the soul. The question why so many converts backslide is here answered. Their joy is evanescent. "Anon they receive the word with joy." They flourish so long as their short-lived, superficial joy continues, and then they wither away. The remedy is found in the abiding Comforter promised by Jesus, and appropriated by a distinctive faith after justification. The rock was not smitten until Egypt was left behind. Gladness in Jesus has an important place in the economy of salvation. It conserves fidelity and conquers Satan. The Orphean lyre is a better safeguard than the Ulyssean wax. Lashing one's self to the mast may be heroic, but it is not the highest style of heroism. Jason acted a braver and a wiser part than Ulysses. To be sure, it is better to incapacitate one's self for sin than to be cast into hell "having two hands and two feet." But it is still better to present the whole body a living sacrifice, and, with all our faculties unimpaired and free, to love the Lord with all the strength.

In conclusion, while we urge all to a joyful experience, we caution all against seeking joy instead of Jesus, the Joy Giver.

"Thee let me drink, and thirst no more

For drops of finite happiness!

Spring up, O Well, in heavenly power,

In streams of pure perennial peace;

In joy which none can take away,

In life which shall forever stay."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/daniel-steele/jason-and-the-sirens-victory-in-temptation/>

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