

# Satan's Steps in Temptation

by Dwight Pentecost

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*Dwight Pentecost's sermon explores the nature of temptation and the methods Satan uses to lead individuals astray, emphasizing the importance of understanding and resisting these temptations through scripture.*

**Duration:** 41:09

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 15:22, Matthew 4:7, Luke 4:13, Romans 13:14, Galatians 5:16, 1 John 2:16

**Topics:** "Temptation", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the steps of temptation that led David to disgrace and how Satan uses these same steps to lead individuals away from God's will. The preacher emphasizes that Satan can only appeal to the fleshly, selfish, and prideful nature within us. The sermon also highlights the importance of understanding the nature of temptation and using the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to resist it. The preacher concludes by offering Jesus Christ as the savior who can break sin's bondage and make individuals children of God, but emphasizes the need for personal acceptance of Christ.

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## Transcript

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the new light now shining.

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. May God add his blessing to the reading of this word.

Many of God's children have been deceived into believing that Satan is invincible. That when he comes to tempt a man, there is nothing the individual can do to withstand him. That he has so many devices at his disposal, when we resist him on one front, we can always fall back to some other device, so that whether we desire it or not, eventually he must triumph over us in it.

This which is a common view among God's children is a lie of the devil. It is a lie designed to blind us to the steps which Satan uses in temptation. For if we understand these steps, and are on guard against them, if we understand the devices of the evil one, we are prepared to meet him, and by the Spirit's help, to defeat him.

We do not question the truth of the declaration of the Apostle Peter, who in 1 Peter 5, 8 says, Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour. Satan roars to attract attention to himself, and to distract us from the true nature of the devices of the wicked one. The Apostle John, in his first epistle, chapter 2 and verse 16, writes to us concerning the avenues through which Satan can assault an individual.

And it is a comfort to me to know that Satan cannot attack through a multitude of channels or courses, but he can attack the individual through only three. For these three, and only these three, are the gates through which Satan can enter into the life of an individual. They are well known.

The Apostle John writes that all that is in the world can be summarized under three categories, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Many will conclude, after analyzing these three, that Satan needs no more, that they are sufficient, and it gives him ample opportunity to attack the citadel in order to destroy the walk of the child of God. Satan has to appeal to the nature that is within us.

Satan is no innovator. Satan cannot start anything new. He can only begin to work with what man is.

And the nature of man, according to the Apostle John, can be summarized under three categories, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And all temptation has to fit under one of these three categories, and all sin of necessity falls under one of these three heads, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three divide sin into three general categories.

There is that which is fleshly, or that which is carnal. This division recognizes that man, because of Adam's sin, is possessed of a nature that is characterized by its fleshliness, by its appetites, its desires, its cravings, its passions. And there are sins that are peculiarly sins of the flesh.

And Satan may appeal to this area. The second category of sin, which gives a second characterization of the nature of man, is the phrase, the lust of the eyes. This reveals to us the fact that man is not only carnal by nature, but also basically selfish.

That what he sees he desires and covets, and what he desires or covets through his sight, he will go to any ends to attain for himself. This may be in a realm widely separated from the realm of the flesh, but

man is covetous or selfish by nature, and Satan may appeal through the eyes to this category of the human nature to lead man away in temptation through the basic selfishness of the individual. The third category of sins, appealing to the third basic characteristic of the human nature, is found in this third phrase, the pride of life.

There are those sins that appeal to pride, because the human nature is basically proud. It loves and seeks and strives for that which promotes the individual, elevates the individual, pleases the individual, gives a sense of independence to the individual as one who is self-sustaining. Now, when Satan comes to an individual to tempt him, his temptation must appeal to one of these three basic characteristics of the human nature, its carnal capacity, its selfish interest, or its pride.

Satan may appeal to the mind, he may appeal to the heart, but those are only stepping stones to move the will. For Satan is not concerned only in having an individual receive a temptation and play around with that temptation. Satan is concerned with having the individual succumb to that temptation.

So that Satan is directing his temptations ultimately to the will of the individual, to produce an act or a work that is contrary to the revealed will of God. And he may use the mind, or he may use the heart, or a combination of these two, but ultimately his desire is to produce an act that comes from the will of the individual who submits to the enticements of Satan and follows him in disobedience against God. And any temptation that Satan presents to you will fall into one of these three categories and follow this pathway from the mind to the heart and ultimately on to the will.

For Satan recognizes that what a man knows, he comes to love, and what a man loves, he will obey. So Satan plants a seed in the mind and then generates that seed so that affection for that thing is produced, knowing that what a man loves ultimately he will serve. This process may be spread over an extensive period of time.

In which a seed is planted and then left, so that over a long period a man comes to love what Satan has proposed before the individual comes to obey Satan's bidding. Or it may be a process that is speeded up so that love for that thing which Satan has planted in the mind may be almost instantaneous. But the one object and the goal is to produce obedience to that which Satan desires.

And if an individual, in facing any temptation, can pause a moment to analyze that temptation, he can discover immediately into which category it falls, whether it is an appeal to the lust of the flesh, whether it is an appeal to the basic selfish nature through the lust of the eyes, or whether it is an appeal to pride that works through the pride of life. And when he is able to determine the nature of the attack, then he can use the Word of God energized by the Spirit of God to meet that attack because he recognizes it for what it actually is, a temptation from the evil one. Now this principle is well illustrated in Satan's attack against our Lord in the temptation in the wilderness.

We remember in Hebrews 4.15 the Apostle wrote that Christ was tempted or tested in all points like as we are, yet without sin. And what the Apostle is affirming is the fact that when Satan came to divert Christ from the path of implicit obedience to his Father in heaven, he used the same basic three approaches that he has used from the time of his temptation of Eve right down to the present moment. And he exhausted his capacity to tempt and the approaches through which he might tempt when he met Christ in the wilderness.

I'm turning to the fourth chapter of Luke's gospel to see Luke's record of the temptation. We read that when Satan and Christ came into conflict, Christ was hungered after his 40 days in the wilderness without food. Christ was sustained by his perfect obedience to the will of God and his dependence upon God for sustenance in those days.

And we read in verse 2 that in those days he did eat nothing, and when they were ended he afterward hungered. And Luke records for us the fact that Christ was so sustained by his dependence upon God for those 40 days that he felt no hunger whatsoever. And it was only after that extended period of time in which God permitted him to feel hunger pains in order that Satan's temptation might be very real.

Now, hunger is a perfectly natural, normal appetite. And in the proper satisfaction of that appetite, there is no sin. I am thankful that my salvation has not taken away my privilege of enjoying a good meal.

I must safeguard that privilege against the sin of gluttony, of intemperance or misuse of the privilege. But the hunger itself was a perfectly normal and natural appetite. But it is associated with this fleshly body.

Therefore, the temptation which Satan presented to Christ was in the area of the lust of the flesh. Nothing wrong in the appetite, and nothing wrong in the proper satisfaction of that appetite. But to satisfy it in obedience to Satan rather than to endure it in obedience to the will of God is a sin.

And so Satan came to Christ, and assuming the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he said, if, or as it might better be translated, since thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. Now, it is not our purpose to try to study the temptation of Christ in detail, but only to point out this morning the avenues through which Satan attacked Christ. And we observe, first of all, that his attack was in the area of the lust of the flesh.

He sought to assault the citadel of Christ's obedience by diverting Christ from the path of obedience. And his appeal was in the area of the flesh. And Christ, recognizing that temptation, replied from the word of God, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

And when God the Father said to God the Son, Be hungry, it was sin for Christ to satisfy himself as he had the power to do in response to Satan's testing. He was tested first, the area of the flesh. The second place, the devil took him up into a high mountain and showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

According to the prophetic scriptures, Christ was destined to rule over those kingdoms as King of kings and Lord of lords. And Satan's second method of testing was to reveal all that which Christ ultimately would have as his own when given to him by the Father. Christ's temptation here was a temptation that came through the lust of the eyes as Satan showed him that which eventually would be his, but to create in him a desire to have it now, to have it in his time rather than to wait for God's time.

It was a test in which that which God promised was used to test Christ's willingness to wait. But the appeal came to him through the lust of the eyes, an appeal to a selfish nature to demand now what God is withholding as though God were selfish in being unwilling to relinquish that which he had promised to the Son. And again, determining the nature of this temptation, Christ used the word of God and said, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

And in response to an appeal to selfishness, Christ said, I am willing to wait God's time. The third temptation came in the third area where Christ has demonstrated perfect submission to God and perfect

dependence upon God. Now he is tested in the area of that dependence.

As he is placed on the pinnacle of the temple, he is invited, Test thyself now, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. It was an appeal to pride. You have demonstrated, it is as though Satan said, a remarkable faith in God.

Now demonstrate that faith that all men may commend you for your faith. Demonstrate before men by casting yourself down into the valley below just how great your faith is, that you might be honored for your faith. This appeal to pride to demonstrate for selfish ends, for self-promotion, the faith in God that he possesses.

And for the third time, recognizing this attack of the evil one, Satan was turned aside by Christ's dependence upon the word of God. Thou shalt not tempt or put to the test the Lord thy God. Then we read this significant word in Luke 4.13, when the devil had ended all the temptation.

I would underline that little word, all. For when Satan had appealed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and to the pride of life, there was no other channel through which he could seek to approach the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was faced with this temptation without a carnal or fleshly nature, without a selfish nature, without a nature characterized by pride.

But Satan had no other devices to tempt Christ than those which he has used so successfully in the life of every man from the time of Adam's sin to the present time. And Christ's victory came because he recognized the nature of the appeal and then could use the appropriate scripture to resist that temptation. You will notice this was not a blind adherence to the word of God, but Christ, analyzing and understanding the temptation, was able to apply a specific principle and promise of the word of God to that temptation.

Many of us go down in defeat before Satan, not because we don't respect the word of God, for we do, but we are ignorant of what is in the pages of the word of God, and we are unable to apply specifically a word to a situation. And if we are to resist Satan's temptation, we must first understand the nature of the temptation. We must discern the avenue of attack.

We must be able to analyze what Satan is doing and what method he is using, and then go to a specific portion of the word of God that deals with that situation and apply the scriptures to the tempter in order that he might be defeated. And this Christ did. May I turn you to 2 Samuel, chapter 11, for the record given to us of one who was tested by the evil one, who did not triumph, and sin is written across the pages of the word of God to remind us of the peril that faces the child of God who does not discern Satan's method of attack and then use the scriptural principles to resist that attack.

It's King David, who will himself upon his housetop in the evening of the day. We read in the second verse, It came to pass in an evening tide that David arose from off his bed and walked upon the roof of the king's house. From the roof he saw a woman washing herself.

The woman was very beautiful to look upon. Verse 4, David sent messengers and took her, and she came in unto him, and he lay with her. We notice in the second verse that Satan's first attack to David was through the eyes, the lust of the eyes.

For he saw, he saw. And because he was basically selfish, as all men are selfish, he coveted what he saw. He could rationalize with himself and say, I am a king, and as a king I have absolute authority over all

my subjects, and it is a royal prerogative to requisition that which the king desires.

But the word of God was very specific. He had on one hand the law that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. He had further instruction.

This instruction was given to us back in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy, chapter 17. There is Moses preparing Israel to become a self-governing nation. He anticipated that God one day would give Israel a king.

And these are some of the commands. In verse 14, Thou shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are around about me. Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God hath chosen.

One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee. Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to the end that he should multiply horses.

For as much as the Lord hath said unto you, ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Man will trust in might, in power, in self-defense, and will not cast themselves in dependence upon God. So God said the king shall not build a great stable of horses.

Verse 17, Neither shall he multiply wives to himself that his heart turn not away. Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. That which David was contemplating was forbidden not only by the law but by the added specific instructions of the word of God.

What David saw, what he saw he coveted because he was basically selfish. That was his nature. Then what David saw he lusted after and he sent for her.

And the lust of the eyes promoted lust of the flesh and he put a plan into operation to gain that which the flesh coveted. And that which he saw and desired he took. In the fourth verse the record is given that David sent messengers and took her.

The mind saw, then the heart lusted, and then the will disobeyed the word of God. The steps of temptation that carried David to disgrace are the steps that Satan uses in the experience of every man to bring that individual out of the will of God, out of the place of obedience to God, to bring the individual to obedience to himself. That which the flesh desires and that which man sees because he is carnal and selfish he gives himself to and falls into temptation.

And we find that the word of God gives some specific instructions because of the three steps in temptation. For instance, if you turn to Philippians chapter four and verse eight, the apostle speaks concerning the mind. Philippians chapter four, verse eight.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, be any praise, think on these things. Again, in 2 Corinthians chapter ten and verse five, the apostle says, we are to cast down imaginations, that is, bring under judgment every wicked thought and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Satan begins with the mind, and he plants a desire in that mind, whether through the flesh or through selfish desire, that thought is planted.

And the word of God says, uproot that seed Satan has planted before it germinates, before it goes a step further. For if that thought planted by Satan is allowed to remain in the mind, it will move on to bear its fruit. So when Satan attacks through the mind, that thought is to be judged, it is to be recognized as a satanic approach, it is to be recognized as the first step in temptation, and it is to be uprooted by the word of God and by the power of the Spirit, so it is not allowed to remain to produce sin.

And then in the second place, Satan moves from the mind to the area of the heart. For that thought that he has planted that appeals to the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes, he gets men to desire, to love, to work for, to seek for, to grasp after. And that is why Solomon, who had great experience in wrestling with Satan, usually to his own destruction, wrote in Proverbs 4.23, Keep or guard thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. You see, if that seed planted in the mind is allowed to remain, to begin to germinate, the heart will begin to love what Satan has put there. That's why the Apostle has to command us in I John 2.15, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

James has to remind us that to love the world is to become an adulteress against God, because the world is no friend of God. And a man needs to examine not only his mind to keep it cleansed, but to examine his affections. Lest an affection for things that appeal to the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes or the pride of life become the focus of our affections.

For what a man knows and loves, he ultimately will obey unless that progress is interrupted by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. I Samuel chapter 15 and verse 22. Samuel reminds Saul that to obey is better than sacrifice.

To obey is better than sacrifice. And if a man has received a temptation to his selfish, proud, carnal nature, and he begins to love that, if the temptation has progressed that far, then it is time to recognize that to obey that thing is disobedience against God and to move in at that point to arrest the growth of the temptation before it comes to its full fulfillment. To obey is better than sacrifice.

In writing to the Romans at the conclusion of chapter 13, verse 14, Paul gave us a summary principle that is of paramount importance. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. Make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.

We are prone to put ourselves in situations to make such preparations for Satan's attack against us that we simplify his work. And Paul warns the child of God against opening his mind so that Satan can pour thoughts into it. He warns the child of God against opening his heart so that Satan can stir emotions within it to lead an individual to an act of disobedience through his will.

A lot that we read, a lot that we see, a lot that we do is diametrically opposed to Paul's principle of Romans 13, 14. For we are filling our minds with that which Satan finds there. He didn't have to put it there.

We put it there ourselves. We've made provision for the flesh. And Satan moves in on that which we have put there because we did not heed Paul's admonition.

We have allowed our affections to be diverted from the Lord Jesus Christ and we have come to love the things of this world so that Satan's work is already partly done. And Satan can move in on the affections for which he is now responsible, which we have generated. And then we wonder why we're under such

attack from the evil one.

And it's not his fault. He's only taking advantage of what you provided him to work with. And it's a short step from disobedience to this principle to falling into sin.

Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. The burden of my message to you this morning, child of God, is that you might understand that Satan cannot attack you in an infinite variety or number of ways. He must appeal in only three ways.

He must appeal to that which is fleshly, that which is selfish, that which is the manifestation of pride. The Word of God gives us a defense through the Word in order that we might understand the nature of the temptation and then to meet it through the Word, through the Holy Spirit. Perhaps more than anything, we need to safeguard our minds and hearts so that we are not doing the sowing ourselves.

Satan can use to produce sin in our experience. May I remind you who do not know Jesus Christ as a personal Savior, that Satan is only concerned in passing with what you do, whether you follow him in sin or ignore him, is of little concern to him. Satan is concerned with just one thing for you, and that is that you should not accept Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Whether you sin or not, you are still his unless you accept Christ personally. On the authority of the Word of God, may I say to you, in order that he might deliver you from bondage to Satan, that he might translate you out of his family and his kingdom to bring you into the family of God. The one thing Satan desires above everything else is that you should not come face to face with Christ and accept him as a personal Savior.

This morning as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I offer you a Savior who can break sin's bondage, can remove sin's guilt, can take away sin's stain, can make you a child of God. But in order to become a son of God, that Jesus Christ, will you do that? In order that you might be delivered from your adversary, the devil. We pray, our Father, that God the Holy Spirit may instruct us this morning in the nature of the warfare in which we are engaged.

Help us to understand the nature that we have within us to which Satan appeals. To understand that we might walk in a path of obedience.

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