

# Temptation of Christ

by William Fitch

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the prince of this world and the dangers of loving the world, while highlighting the victory of Christ and the need for faith in Him.*

**Duration:** 29:20

**Scripture:** John 16:33, 1 Corinthians 15:57, Ephesians 6:12, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 4:4, 1 Peter 4:17, 1 John 3:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Obedience"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for wholehearted obedience to Christ in the midst of tragic and dark times. The church is called to be purified and judgment should begin within the house of God. The sermon highlights the enmity between loving the world and worshiping the God of this world, which leads to bondage and defeat. The preacher also reminds the church that Jesus has overcome the prince of this world, but many Christians struggle because they haven't fully surrendered to God. The sermon encourages the church to remember that behind the allure of the world is the prince of this world, and it is his temptation to turn believers away from God.

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## Transcript

... three great temptations, and it is significant that these three great temptations come along the specific avenues against which we have heard the Apostle John so constantly warn us. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, selfishness, presumption, compromise. The first temptation has as its bait Christ's own personal need, selfishness.

The second temptation has as its bait the Jewish nation, presumption. And the third temptation has as its bait the whole wide world, compromise. And there is surely some probability that the third temptation, which is the last in this trilogy of temptations, using as its bait the world and all its gilded glories, was the strongest temptation of them all, because surely the devil would hold his strongest weapons till the last.

And if that be so, the last temptation that he uses is the temptation of the lure of the world. Once again, let me read the text. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, and said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt but fall down and worship me.

There is the record. Our Lord was tempted, really, particularly, severely, intense, agonizingly tempted to grasp at this present evil world. And we must constantly remind ourselves that this temptation was a real

thing.

This isn't just a piece of dramatic action that's introduced at this particular point of our Savior's life. Some kind of shadow show temptation. No, our Lord himself is severely and sharply and bitterly tempted, and all the most fury of Satan and of hell itself rise against him in this hour.

And as I say, and I repeat, the third and probably the most severe is the lure of the world. The glittering prize, the worldly acclaim and glory are, as the evangelist has it, the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. While that is so, while it is true that our Savior was most really tempted and that gloriously he overcame, it is also true that all this is written for our learning, for our understanding of heavenly things, and for our growth in grace.

And this we must continually therefore remember, that behind the world is the God of this world, and that it is his business to turn the eyes of the children of God from their God and to make them unfaithful to the Lord, the Redeemer. Very well then, having noted these things, let's move nearer to our particular passage, and let's try and note the lessons that are here written so clearly for our admonition and for our help. Some lessons that the Church in our generation must never forget.

I want to suggest, first of all, that the Church must never forget that behind all the pull and pressure of the world is the Prince of this world, that behind all the glory of this world is the God of this world. And this the temptation narrative makes most clear, because here is Satan, here is the devil, here is the accuser, the diabolos, and he takes our Savior up into an exceeding high mountain, and there on that exceeding high mountain he shows to him all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. And he says, all this will I give thee.

The evangelists tell us that our Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Here, as we study this record, we see that the gift of the world and the gift of the glories of this world are in the hand of Satan, that they are in the power of the devil, who is the Prince of this world. Let me speak to that for just a moment.

Our authority is, as always, the New Testament and the entire Bible, because all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, and Scripture is its own best commentary, and it is in the light of Scripture that we understand Scripture. That is our position here, in this pulpit and in this church, that we look not to any man. We look to the Word of God as our sole and single and sufficient authority of revelation.

And the New Testament is very emphatic about this. The Bible does not theorize about the origin of evil, or about the fact of a personal power of evil. But this the Bible does.

The Bible affirms it. Consistently and continuously the Bible affirms it. And I say that it is impossible to study the New Testament and not recognize that a personal power of evil is continual in its vision.

This, for example. Our Lord is speaking to his hearers, and he says this kind of thing. Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. And it is this same evil power that is spoken of as the prince of this world. Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, and he speaks to them about the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

And again he writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4, 4. And he says, In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. The God of this world blinding man's mind. How all this means, that Satan is not only the object of the world's worship, he is also the moving spirit of his godless activities.

And when a soul is converted, when a soul is born again of the Holy Ghost, regenerate by divine grace, the New Testament describes that as a deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It's a translation from one kingdom into another kingdom. It's a deliverance from one ruler into the blessed liberty of another throne.

And all this the church must never forget. In some circles, I know as you know, that it is popular to spell the word devil with the D left out, thus denying his religiousness, and to speak of evil instead of speaking of the devil. And so often in church fellowship, we can forget that our adversary the devil goth about like a roaring lion.

So often we can forget what our Savior reminded Simon Peter about. In that day when our Lord looked into the eyes of his servant and disciple Simon and said this, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat. But then he went on to say, But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

As the church faces the world, she must ever remember that behind all the pull and pressure of the world, there is the prince of the world. And that he is the spirit of disobedience, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Now that may seem very elementary, but nothing is too elementary in these days.

It's the first thing to note. Behind the pull and pressure of the world is the prince of this world. And here's the second thing that the church must never forget.

To love the world is to worship the God of this world, and thereby to come into bondage to the devil. Let's be very particular here. Let's note what the devil said to our Lord.

All these things will I give thee, as they stand upon that exceeding high mountain, and all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them are there presented to the gaze of our Redeemer. The devil says, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt but fall down and worship me. Here's a gift and here's a condition on which the gift may be received.

The gift is the world and the condition is the worship of Satan. Now that again is very simple and very clear. Yet at the same time it's extremely vital that you and I should know it.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, says John. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but are of the world. And the world, part of the way, and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abideth forever.

You see, there is this absolute dichotomy between the God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the God of this world. And to love the world and to go after, to get the things of this world, is to come into bondage to the devil. Because he says, I will give you these things.

Perhaps the most outspoken of all the New Testament writers is James, brother of our Lord. As he writes concerning this and he says, Ye ask and ye receive not. Ye ask and ye receive not because ye ask amiss

that ye may consume it on your own lusts.

Ye adulterers and ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world is the enemy of God. And can anything be more emphatic than that? Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Because if he is seeking the world, he is bowing down before the God of this world.

Yet so many modern Christians fail to see this. So many dear Christian people in this city are failing today to recognize the true New Testament pattern of things. So many there are who think they can get the best of two worlds.

Think they can get some of Christ and some of the God of this world. Do you know what James called this? Listen again. Ye adulterers and ye adulteresses, don't you know that the friendship of this world is enmity against God? When this happens in a man's heart, when he thinks that he will just keep one foot here and one foot there and try the ocean of experience and get part of Christ and part of the devil, when this happens, there is this result.

There is a man with no joy. There is a man with no vital testimony. There is a man with no radiant life.

And the reason? He is a man who has let himself become bound by Satan. Satan has shown to him, as he shows to us all, all the glories of this world. And Satan says, I will give them to you if you'll only come into subjection to me.

And that man says, give them me. And when he says that, immediately he is bound. He loses the joy that once he had.

He loses his first love. The thrilling and the glorious and the splendid vision that was once before him of a Christ that died upon the cross for him and whom he vowed he would follow forever and wherever he leads. And he finds himself engaged in a continual conflict with himself.

And a sense of guilt complex develops within his own heart. And there is no release. And there is no victory.

And every day he goes down to defeat. And why? Because he hasn't cut the lines that really separate him utterly unto God. Here is the reason for so many lackluster Christians today.

They haven't faced the issue. Or if they have, they've refused to accept the implications. I wonder if I'm speaking to some of you this morning.

Oh, men and women. The times are too tragic. The night is too dark.

God's sorrow is too great for you and me to be content with anything less than a whole obedience unto the Christ. For this the vision tarries. Because the church has not been purified as with fire.

And is it not time for judgment to begin at the house of God? Let's recognize what the Bible is saying. You can have the world. But you will only have it by suffering yourself to be bound to the God of this world.

And that kind of action, says the Bible, is enmity against God. Well, there are two things that you must never forget. You must never forget that behind the pull and pressure of the world is the prince of this world.

You must never forget that to love the world is to worship the God of this world. And thereby to come into bondage and to go down into defeat. But a third thing that the church must never forget is this.

That her Lord has overcome the prince of this world. This he did here. He was led into temptation, but he was delivered from the evil one.

When the devil offered unto him all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, he answered and said, Get thee hence, Satan. And through this word he conquered and triumphed because God was there at the center of all his life. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.

He overcame. And the devil left him for a season, but only for a season. Because all through his ministry he was assaulted and tested by the evil one.

Continuously all the stratagem and ingenuity of the powers of darkness were leveled against him. But all the way through the conflict he went to victory. And at the end of his life, before the cross, he was able to say, The prince of this world cometh and shall find nothing in me.

Nothing. Thank God for that. Though assaulted at every point, yet he never failed because he came to destroy the works of the devil.

And he did. And the story of the life of Jesus is the story of absent victory over all the powers of darkness and over the devil. The prince, the God of this world.

He came to his Calvary, the end that was made inevitable when he refused to bow down and worship Satan in the wilderness temptation. And on Calvary, you remember and recall, he cried, It is finished. And it was the shout of a victor.

It was that way all the way through, all the journey through. Conquering and to conquer he moved on. Do you remember how he said, as he sent his disciples out and they came back and told him, He said, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Do you remember when the Greeks came and said, Sir, we would see Jesus? And our Lord answered, Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

It is in the judgment of the devil that all men are drawn to the Christ. Whether it be to him as to save or to him as to judge, this is the revelation. But the devil is a defeated foe that unto Christ every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father, always victor.

And for this cause the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil and that he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Christian friends, prince of this world is a defeated foe, operating only with divine permission and within prescribed limits, suffered still to tempt and to allure, but by faith we meander into the victory that is Christ's, because he is overcome forever. Forever, there are three things that the church must never forget.

She must never forget that behind the pull and pressure of the world is the prince of this world. She must never forget that to love the world is to be in bondage to the God of this world. She must never forget that Christ has overcome the prince of this world.

One final word. The church must never forget that in this victory she may share, for this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. What faith? The faith that Christ is Lord.

The faith that he is sovereign. The faith that he is the Son of God and the only Savior of our souls. The faith that he is Lord.

The faith that God's word is true. The faith that God's word is mighty. The faith that God is true according to his promise.

The faith that if we rest upon this promise, we too shall be delivered. We too shall be ransomed from the power of the devil. We too shall be made to walk continuously in victory, never in defeat, but constantly in victory in Christ led in the train of his triumph.

We too sharing his victory. How do we do that? By faith. You resist the devil and you find he flees from you because God's word has said that he will resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Flee you for lusts. You do that and you find that you flee right into the arms of God. Flee from all things that are unclean and uncertain and unsure and you discover that the Lord himself is walking with you.

By faith you refuse to continue in sin because that which is born of God sinneth not, does not continue willfully to sin and you reject all the works of the devil. You set the Lord always before you, always before you. And as you do that by faith, you enter in, into victory and you begin to share the triumph of the Son of God.

And just as he overcame the world, you too overcome. My, what a message this is to stand and to declare. What a message it is to take to one's own heart.

To know that in Jesus Christ our life, there is absolute and final deliverance from all the overthrow of Satan and that in him we too may share the victory. My, speaking to some of you this morning, your life has just been a life of continual defeat. I wonder, some particular point you've just been going down continually and you're almost in despair this morning.

Oh, I want to tell you that there is victory in the Lord and that there is victory for you this morning. That he can do something for you today that he has never done before just because you by faith will enter into it, possess it and from his hand receive. But you see, you have to be prepared to bring him even your defeat, to bring him yourself in your utter helplessness and to lay all that before him and say, Lord, I have nothing to bring you, just this, this sorry mess of myself.

But if thou canst do anything, have compassion upon us and help us. Do you know, I tell you, when that kind of prayer and that kind of attitude are seen, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. There's one thing else to add.

Every victory won and every life brought into a place of complete victory in Christ is another pledge that others are going to be won. So let us bring ourselves today. Will you bring yourself, your all, your need to the Savior now? You can't face the devil.

You need to be delivered from his bondage. But Christ is able to do just that and he will. He'll do it now.

You prepared for all his perfect will this morning. God grant unto us all the victory of faith. It overcomes.

I wonder if...

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