

The Temptations of Our Lord

by Zac Poonen

Jesus' example of self-limitation and obedience to God's word is an example for us to follow in our Christian walk.

Duration: 50:49

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-6, Luke 15:12, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Temptations"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses concern for young people who may start out well in their faith but fall away. He encourages them to follow his advice and not be influenced by negative examples in the Christian community. The speaker warns against doubting what God has shown in moments of clarity and emphasizes the importance of resisting temptation. He also cautions against using spiritual gifts for personal gain, citing Jesus as an example of someone who did not seek wealth through his anointing. The sermon references biblical passages, such as John chapter two, to support these teachings.

Transcript

Consider Jesus as our forerunner, one who is an example for us to follow, one who has gone ahead of us and asks us to follow him, who never asks us to go on a path which he never went himself. I want to begin with a verse in Revelation 3, where the Lord spoke to the church in Laodicea and its elders. The word comes down to all of us because it is not a word only to them in Laodicea.

It says here, He who overcomes anyone, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne. Put these two phrases together, he who overcomes, as I also overcame. So we see that Jesus, when he was here on earth, although he was God, he never used his resources and power as God to live or even to serve.

Because if that were the case, he could not have been an example for us, he could not have been a forerunner for us. Many people think that Jesus lived on earth and he could live like that because he was God, but he never used the power he had as God. We have some clear examples of that.

For example, it says he came near a fig tree to find if there was fruit in it. If he had used his power as God, he would not need to come near a fig tree. He would know whether there is fruit in the fig tree on the other side of the earth.

But he kept himself from using those resources and powers that he had as God in order to be an example for us. It is important for us to see this, otherwise we will never be able to follow him. We worship him because he is God.

People worshipped him on earth because he was God on earth too. But we can follow him because he limited himself. When it says he emptied himself, what did he empty himself of? He could never empty himself of being God.

That would be impossible. God Himself cannot do that. But he emptied himself of those powers that he had as God so that he could become like us and live on earth like us.

He was made in all things like his brothers, overcome sin like we have to overcome, overcome Satan like we have to overcome, to be filled with the Spirit like we have to be filled with the Spirit, to receive grace. Luke 2, verse 40 says, the grace of God was upon him like the grace of God needs to be upon us and from that grace he received strength and power and lived that perfect life, showing us that it is possible to please God perfectly if we yield to his grace and even his ministry. He did not fulfill his ministry as God.

If that were the case, he did not need to be anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is because he fulfilled his ministry as a man with the power of man that he needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and it was through the anointing of the Holy Spirit that he did those supernatural miracles. So he says here, I overcame.

That means he battled and he overcame, and he says to us, you also overcome. There was a time when James and John, two disciples of Jesus, came to him and said, Lord, we would like to sit with you on your throne, left side and right side, and Jesus did not say that is impossible. He said, but can you drink the cup that I am drinking? Can you be baptized with this baptism of death and suffering that I am going to go through? If you can, then you can sit with me on my throne.

And here he tells us in verse twenty-one how he sat on the father's throne and how James and John and you and I can sit with him on his throne. He says, I overcame, and therefore I am sitting with my father on his throne, and if you overcome, you can also sit with me on my throne. That is the answer to the question that James and John asked him, how can we sit with you on your throne? All of us can.

There is a place there not only for one or two, there is a place there for all who overcome. And that is why the last book of the Bible, Revelation, is full of this theme of overcoming. He who is an overcomer will be my son, God says, and will inherit all things.

We will not have an opportunity to overcome when we go to heaven, because there is nothing to overcome there. We will have an opportunity to worship, praise, fellowship, all these things there will be plenty of time for in eternity in heaven, but overcoming, no. Taking up the cross, no.

If we do not take the opportunities we have now on earth to overcome and be overcomers, we will never get another opportunity in all of eternity. This is the only life where we have the opportunity to overcome, and every year that you waste in your life by not overcoming, you have missed something for eternity. You can never get it back.

God can forgive your sin, but how can He give you all the months of 1998 that have gone by which you may have wasted, all the opportunities you had from January this year till right now to overcome that you never took seriously and you wasted. Even Almighty God cannot give you all that back. He can give you

opportunities in the future, but the opportunities that are missed are gone forever.

And that should bring a seriousness into our life, to say, Lord, I want to make use of every opportunity that comes in the future to be an overcomer. And in this context, we can look at Matthew's Gospel, chapter 3, where we read of the temptations of Jesus. We saw how Satan tempted Eve and Adam.

We saw how he tested and tried and attacked Job. And here we are given in detail the three temptations that Satan came with to Jesus in the wilderness. These are not the only temptations Jesus faced.

Hebrews 4.15 tells us He was tempted in every point, as we are, right from childhood all through the years in Nazareth and all through to the end of His life. And it was when He had finished overcoming every single temptation that He died on the cross, saying, It is finished. The work of salvation was finished, not only because the guilt of our sin had been taken completely, but also because every temptation that we ever face, also He had faced and overcome.

It was finished. And in the midst of that were these three particular temptations, which are described for us in detail here in Matthew, chapter 3. And from this, we can learn a number of lessons for us to follow, because we are told we are to fix our eyes on Jesus, who is our forerunner, the author of our faith, who has gone in front of us, and we are to follow in His footsteps. And we see, just like Jesus was anointed, we need to be anointed, we already saw that.

And once He was anointed, He went into a period of trial and testing in the wilderness. Satan immediately attacked Him. And the interesting thing here is, we read in verse 1 that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Does the Holy Spirit lead us into such situations? It says here that the Holy Spirit, who anointed Jesus, led Him. This is the very next thing that happened after the anointing. The very next thing that came in Jesus' ministry after He was anointed was not going out into a supernatural ministry.

It was trial and temptation. And the same thing will happen to us. You see, before God can entrust a ministry to us, He has to test us.

And the greater the ministry, the greater the testing. Just like aluminum is tested in factories depending on what it is going to be used for. If the aluminum is going to be used for making children's toys, it doesn't have to be tested much.

Any ordinary aluminum will do. But if that aluminum is going to be used for making aircraft, then they will subject it to intense tests, put it in very high temperatures in the fire and immediately into ice-cold water and back into the fire and back into the ice to see whether it can withstand such changes of temperature. Because this aluminum is not going to be used to make children's toys.

This is for aircraft. People's lives are dependent on it. So there we see an illustration from earthly things how the greater the task some metal has to perform, the more intense will be the testing.

And if God takes you through testing, intense testing, it is an indication that He has some wonderful ministry ahead of that, if you can look forward to that. But you have got to be faithful in that temptation. It was like that with Joseph we saw.

He went through a period of intense trial and testing because he had a great ministry ahead of him. And like that with David, who went through a period of testing. And I also mentioned, if you remember, that those like King Saul and King Solomon who came to the throne without going through periods of trial and testing, you know what tremendous failures they were as kings.

And those who don't go through any time of testing and come into a ministry, those who have had a very comfortable life and then begin to preach God's word or seek for a comfortable life and preach God's word, their ministry is always shallow in one hundred percent of cases. If you want to be a man of God with a ministry that is going to accomplish something for eternity, then you will have to face trial and you will have to go through things that other people never go through because your ministry is so important. God's not using you to make children's toys, but something far more important than that.

And we see here that Satan comes to attack just before a period of wider ministry. And that's happened with all of God's servants throughout the ages, immediately before, when Satan knows that after this anointing, Jesus is going to have a wider ministry. He's not just going to sit there in Nazareth like he was for thirty years.

He begins his attack. And wherever he sees the possibility of a person going forth into a wider ministry, there is going to be a period of intense attack. But we don't have to be afraid because if the Spirit has led us there and the Spirit allows it, we can be sure the Spirit will give us grace to be overcomers in that situation.

We can also see here that Satan came to attack Jesus at a time immediately after God had blessed him in a supernatural way. And that is also true in our lives. Whenever you have had a supernatural blessing from God, a special blessing, times of tremendous refreshment when heaven has been opened over you, like it was at the baptism, immediately after that comes Satanic attack.

God permits it. And therefore Jesus is our forerunner, having gone exactly the same way, we have to go. And all we have to do is look at him.

And we read here that Jesus had fasted forty days and nights and he was hungry at the end of it. And the tempter came to him, and we want to just look at these three temptations one by one and see how they apply to us. The tempter came to him and said to him, if you are the Son of God, you remember what we considered earlier in the temptation that came to Eve.

What were the first words that Satan said to Eve? Has God really said? And those are the first words here also. What had God said at the baptism? This is my beloved son. That is the very thing Satan questions.

Has God really said, you are his son? If you are God's son, it is questioning the thing God had said just the previous day. And Satan always comes to us questioning something God has spoken to us very specifically, to turn us away, to make us doubt, to make us doubt our acceptance. Are you really a child of God? Has the Lord really forgiven your sin? Are you really justified? Is your past really blotted out? I have known believers who live with the memory and the guilt of sins committed many, many years earlier, never seem to shake it off.

And the purpose of that is to hinder their ministry. Even though the word of God is very clear, if we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all sin, but Satan comes, has God really said that? Wasn't that a terrible thing that you did five years ago? You should be ashamed of yourself to call yourself

a child of God and do something like that. God doesn't forgive easily.

And he teaches you this heathen concept of forgiveness, that you have to keep on repenting as though your tears are going to blot out your sins, as though your repentance is going to blot out your sins. He is a liar. Let me say to you, my dear young friends, never doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light.

There was a moment in your life, maybe in a meeting, where the light of God shone so bright and God spoke something to your heart. It could be in a series of meetings like this. One week later, two weeks later, when the light is not so bright, you begin to doubt what God said.

That's the devil. Has God really said, if you are the son of God? And then he tempts him to use the supernatural power he has to meet his own needs. That's the temptation here.

You are the son of God, okay? You have just been anointed with supernatural power. Now use that power to meet your need. Right now, your need is for food.

Use your power to meet that need. It is a temptation that will come to all of us in many, many ways. Use the gift God has given you to make money for yourself.

Do you know the multitudes of preachers who have used the gift God has given them? It could be a gift of healing. It could be a gift of preaching. It could be a gift of evangelism.

It has made them rich. Jesus never made money. He never became wealthy through the gift God gave him.

He was not like today's evangelists and preachers who have built houses and lands, bought lands and built houses and many, many things for themselves using the anointing God gave them. Be careful, my brothers and sisters. Don't ever use the power God gave you for your own ends to meet your own needs.

That's the way all those people have lost the anointing. There are lots of people who have lost the anointing. They carry on with the ministry, but the anointing is gone, because they have used it for their own selfish ends.

It could be to get honor. It could be to get power over people. Use your gift for yourself.

It is a temptation that you will face throughout your ministry. And if you are faithful like Jesus, you will say, No, I will never use my gift or anointing to meet my own needs. And so he refused to turn the stones into bread.

He had no word from the Father, so he would not turn those stones into bread. But at another time, when five thousand people were hungry and they needed bread, then he used his supernatural power to multiply bread for others. So what do we learn from Jesus' example? That the power God gave him, he would only use for others, never for himself.

And I want to tell you, if you will follow this simple rule, that whatever power God gives you, whatever money God gives you, whatever abilities God gives you, whatever talents God gives you, whatever it is that God gives you, you decide you will never use it to enhance your own image, to promote yourself, to make material gain for yourself, to satisfy your earthly needs, but you will readily use it for other people. The anointing of God will remain upon your life right till the end of your life. Otherwise you will lose it, like

many others.

When I was a young Christian and I sought God for His anointing and He anointed me, I looked around at other people who had been anointed once upon a time, people who were much older than me, and I saw them dried up like withered trees, and a tremendous fear came into me. I said, Lord, please save me from this fate. Whatever the cost, whatever else I may lose in my life, I never want to lose Your anointing.

And one of the things which the Lord made clear to me at that time was this, never use what I give you to promote yourself, to enhance your own image, to gain things for yourself, to make material profit for yourself. Go the way Jesus went and the anointing of God will remain upon you forever. I want to share that with you because I have seen too many young people in this land who have started out well and have fallen by the wayside.

And I must say honestly, I don't want to frighten you, but I look at you and I have a great fear that some of you will fall by the wayside. I hope it won't happen. If you follow what I have told you now, it won't happen.

If you listen to these words and take them seriously and look at Jesus and not look at pathetic examples you see in Christendom today, you will not fall by the wayside. You will complete your course with triumph like Jesus, like Paul, like Peter and like many others. And there won't be even a period of backsliding in your life.

It is always when you are seeking to use what God has given you to promote yourself in a church, to exalt yourself, that God withdraws His anointing and confusion and chaos and all types of problems come into your life. So that's the first thing we need to learn from here, that we are not to use what God gives us for ourselves. That was the mistake of the prodigal son.

He received from his father and as soon as he got everything from the father, off he went to use it all for himself. Do you know the number of prodigal preachers there are in Christendom today? Multitudes. They have sought God with fasting and prayer for power.

They said, give me the anointing, like the prodigal son came to his father and said, give me my portion of the inheritance. And the father gave it. And people have received.

And what have they done after they received? They haven't used it for the glory of the father or to build the father's house. They have gone out and built their own kingdom. Beware of that.

Unless you want to end up with the same fate that those people have ended up. They made a lot of money, that's for sure. But wait till Jesus comes and see what paupers and beggars they will be in eternity.

May God open our eyes. Jesus said to Satan, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And there we see something else inherent in this temptation.

Satan was tempting him not only to use his supernatural powers to satisfy himself and meet his own needs, he was also tempting him to put the physical above the spiritual. And that's another temptation that comes to us constantly. Put your physical needs above your spiritual needs.

Throughout your life, you will be tempted with this, because we have physical needs all the time. Here was a physical need Jesus had for food. And that can be a very real need.

He had fasted for 40 days. He could die without food. But even at such a time, he said, I have to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of my father.

That's how I live. Bread is secondary. I'm not saying bread is not important.

God didn't say man shall not live by bread. Jesus said man shall not live by bread alone. So he didn't say we don't need food.

What he said was food is not the most important thing. Every word that proceeds from God's mouth. And I have not heard a word from my father to turn these stones into bread.

Therefore, I will not do it. Even a simple thing like that, which we would not give a second thought to. Well, I have a need and I have the resources to meet that need.

God has given it to me. I can use it. Jesus wouldn't live like that.

He would wait for a word from his father. That relationship with his father, where he lived by every word that God spoke, was far more important to him than food. He was tempted by food.

Jesus was tempted by food. And you and I will be tempted by food to place our physical needs above the spiritual in many, many areas. It could be not just food.

It could be other areas of physical need in your life. As you go on in the ministry and you get married, you have children. There are many, many physical needs that come.

You need housing, you need clothing, you need education for your children and many, many, many things. And in all these material necessities which we all have, there are going to be many temptations that come our way to place these needs above the spiritual. And that is where you must remember the command of Jesus, who said, Seek first the kingdom of God.

Don't be concerned about what you shall eat or what you shall drink or how you'll be clothed or how your children will eat and drink and be clothed. Don't worry about all this. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.

I remember when I was first gripped by this truth years ago as a young man, I felt, Lord, I want to be a living demonstration of the facts, living demonstration of a person who spent his life seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness only and never, never sought after where I can make more money or where I can make a little profit. And Lord, I want you to demonstrate through my life to my generation of my countrymen that your word is still true, that those who seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first will find all the other things needed for their material needs, for their family needs added to them. And I want to encourage you to follow that way.

Today, after serving the Lord full time for nearly 33 years, I can say God's word is true. Don't ever put your physical needs or the physical needs of your family above the spiritual, above your calling, above your ministry. That must always take priority.

God is first. His kingdom, his righteousness is always going to be uppermost. Physical means God will take care of.

And you won't die either. You don't have to be afraid if you put God first. And then we see the second temptation.

The devil took him up to the holy city and stood him on the pinnacle of the temple. All this was in his mind. The temptation was like a thought that flashed into his mind and said to him, Now from the top of this temple, jump down.

Again that statement, if you are the son of God. You say that God said you are the son of God. If you are the son of God, throw yourself down.

Now Satan is very clever. He heard Jesus saying it is written. So he said then we got to tackle him on this.

He is this Bible type of person. So we will reach him by quoting a verse back to him. Be careful.

If you are the type of person who wants a scripture for everything, remember the devil has also got scriptures to quote to you, to lead you astray. So when he heard Jesus say it is written, the devil said, it is written. That he will give his angels charge concerning you.

You see the devil knew exactly the right scripture to quote to Jesus. And if Satan quoted scripture to Jesus, don't you think he will quote scripture to your mind, give you a scripture to jump out on and destroy yourself? Sure. That's why don't just accept any scripture that comes into your mind.

People have done a lot of foolish things by just accepting some scripture that comes into their mind. Wait on the Lord and say, Lord, is that from you? It is written. His angels will take care of you.

Don't be afraid. Just jump down. And Jesus said, on the other hand, it is written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.

On the other hand, or again it is written. When Satan tempts you with one scripture, you must do what Jesus said. But it is also written.

You know, for example, nowadays there are all types of operations going on in the world under the name of, under the label of manifestations of the Holy Spirit. All types of disorderly things are going on. Chaos and confusion in a lot of assemblies.

People barking like dogs and lions and all that and saying it's the Holy Spirit. And it's all. And if you question it, you hear a voice saying, it is written.

Judge not. It is also written. Whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.

What do you do when you hear such voices? You say it is also written. Believe not every spirit, 1 John 4.1. But test the spirits to see whether they are from God. You must know a scripture to quote back to Satan.

Otherwise you'll be scared. You say, oh, perhaps this is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Maybe the Holy Spirit has started barking like a dog.

But I cannot imagine Jesus standing up in a meeting and barking like a dog. And that's enough for me to know that that's not the Holy Spirit. And yet there are multitudes of believers believing all this rubbish that's going on in so-called in Jesus' name.

It is written, believe not every spirit. You say, but there's so much good there. Sure, when the devil wants to give you poison, he'll give it to you in a glass full of pure milk with just a few drops of poison in it.

That's how he destroys you. He won't give you a glass of poison. He knows you won't drink it.

It's with good that poisonous things come, because then only he knows you'll swallow it. So don't be deceived by the good that you see. Test the spirits to see whether they are of God.

Don't just be scared because somebody says it is written. Say it is also written. That's what Jesus did.

And the temptation here to jump off the temple was to presumption, to show your faith in God. Do something stupid to show your faith in God. And the devil will give you some scripture which apparently supports that stupid thing that he wants you to do to destroy yourself.

Now, if Jesus had jumped off from the temple, no angel would have protected him. Jesus knew that. When there are stairs to go down, God doesn't expect you to jump off.

He expects you to walk by the stairs and come down. Please remember that. God has provided means.

I've seen people who would be living on earth today if they had taken medicines. But they died because the devil said, trust the Lord. You don't need to take medicines.

Jump off the temple and prove your faith in God. Do you know the number of people I've met in my life like that? I'm not saying Jesus does not heal. I believe he does.

But I also believe he doesn't ask us to do stupid things. And if there's a staircase going down, I know that he doesn't want me to jump off. I believe that if I were in the middle of a jungle where there is no access to any medicine, nothing, I can trust the Lord to heal me.

But where he provides access to medicines which he himself has created, what is it that people call medicines? Things that God has created in nature. Herbs, plants, minerals, which Almighty God created, not the devil, which he created for healing, for a world which was under the curse. People have discovered it, put it into a tablet and call it a medicine.

But these are all God's creation. It's food. And the devil says, no, don't touch it.

And he fools a lot of people. I know fine young people who are dead today, who would have been living useful in God's ministry if they had not fallen a prey to Satan's suggestions. Jump off.

Trust God. Here's a promise. And they commit suicide.

It is a form of suicide. So this temptation to presumption, to do something spectacular without a leading from God, it may not be only in the area of medicine. It could be in some other area where you want to do something spectacular.

And you want to trust God. And there is no clear leading. And that is why I say to you, when you are young, when you get some of these strange leadings to jump off the top of a temple or something, please go and consult with an older brother who's got a little more wisdom before you decide to jump off.

Whatever it is that the devil is urging you to do, he doesn't want you in God's service. He wants you to destroy yourself. And inherent in this temptation was also this.

See, he was telling Jesus, if you jump off from this temple and descend unhurt into the courtyard below, all the people will say, oh, you are a man of God. It was that honor from people that he was tempting him with. And very often when the devil tempts you to do something stupid and foolish, something spectacular, if you look at your motive, you'll see very often the motive is that after you have done this thing and accomplished something, you can get up and give a testimony as to what you did.

So that everybody will say, what a great man of God you are. It's not for the glory of God at all. It's just for your own honor.

Do you know the number of things people do so that later on they can get up and give a testimony? They may go to smuggle Bibles into China, a good thing to do. But if the motive is that I can come back and tell other people what I did and how God was with me and what a great man of God I was, it's shameful. It's shameful when I'm doing something in the name of Jesus and the ultimate goal is that people might applaud me and think what a great man I was.

And if you examine your heart, you'll see the number of ways in which Satan tempts you along that line. Remember the words of Jesus, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. Don't test the Lord your God by doing stupid things and saying, Lord, protect me.

You won't find His protection. Don't misquote scripture. Compare scripture with scripture and then come to a conclusion and wait on the Lord.

And whenever you're not sure, you don't know whether this leading is from the Lord or from the devil or from your own clever mind, the best thing to do in such situations is wait. Wait on the Lord. Don't be urged on by fanatical extremist preachers and pastors.

That will save your life. Then we come to the third temptation. And the devil took him again in his mind to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Now, I've often thought, could Jesus have been tempted with the glory of the world after 30 years of overcoming temptation? You know, some of us feel after a while, well, the devil can't tempt me anymore with the glory of this world. That doesn't hold any attraction for me. Don't be so sure, my brother, sister.

The one who thinks he stands will fall. Till the end of your life, you need to be careful of the glory of the world. Have you noticed in 1 John chapter 2, it says about the three categories of believers of different maturity.

1 John chapter 2, verse 12 to 14, it speaks about children, young men and fathers. And again, he says, children, young men and fathers. Those who are babes in Christ, those who have grown to a certain amount of maturity and are like young men spiritually, and those who have become spiritual fathers.

And to all three categories of people, including to spiritual fathers, he says, verse 15, do not love the world or the things that are in the world. For the lust of the flesh, verse 16, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is of the world. Do fathers need to be warned about the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life? Sure, there is never a time in our life when we cannot be tempted with the glory of the world.

And that's the one thing we learn from this last temptation. Jesus was tempted at the age of 30, having overcome for so many years in Nazareth, never sinning, with such a cheap type of temptation, the glory of

this world. Money, honor, position, fame.

What do you want, the devil says? I'll give it to you. And if he came to Jesus with such a temptation, you can be absolutely certain till the end of your life and mine, he will come to us and say, what do you want? You want acceptance in Christian circles? Come to me. I'll give it to you, the devil says.

You want popularity? You want a little fame in Christian circles? You want to be recognized in Christian circles? Come to me. I've done that for many other people, and I'll do it for you too. But you have to pay a price.

The devil never gives anything free. It's only God who gives everything free. Remember that.

And he says, just bow down to me a little. That's all you've got to do. He asked Jesus to bow down to him.

You think he won't ask you to bow down to him? He certainly will. Don't think you have gone beyond Jesus at the age of 30. It's good for us to be humble and say, Lord, till the end of my life, I face this possibility of being attracted by something of the glory of this world.

I constantly need to sing that song to myself. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. That's the only way.

Otherwise, the world is attractive. Many things in the world are attractive. You may have started out your Christian life with great zeal and sacrifice and devotion and say, Lord, I want nothing.

I want to live for you. But after a while, you have a wife and children and needs and so many other things, and you find life is a struggle financially. Things are difficult.

And then comes the temptation from Satan to modify your calling, change your vision a little bit. Yeah, I know you had that vision in the beginning, but we've got to be realistic now. You're 35 years old or you're nearly 40 and you've got these children to educate.

You can't let them suffer. And he's got 101 reasons. Change your vision, modify it.

In simple words, just bow down to me a little bit. Forget about what God called you in the beginning for. We got to be realistic, man.

That's what the devil says. And do you know the number of people who've been led astray, who have lost that vision which God called them for in the beginning because something of this world they wanted. And they looked around at other Christian workers who were doing the same thing.

And the devil says, all these people, they're doing it. Why can't you do it too? And that gives you more encouragement to seek for the glory of this world and to bow your head to Satan. If you want to follow the Lord, my brother, sister, I'll tell you from my own experience, it's a lonely path.

You will not find much encouragement in Christendom around you or in Christian workers around you, except an occasional one here and there. The vast majority will not prove to be an encouragement to you. But if you decide to walk that lonely path that your savior walked, you will have no regret when you come to the end of your life.

Say, get behind me, Satan. I'm not going to yield to you. I'm not going to bow down to you.

I would rather die and suffer than bow down to you. And inherent in this temptation, we can say was also this, to try and get what God wants you to have through a shortcut. You know, the devil was saying to Jesus, what have you come to this world for? You've come to get the world, right? Back to the Father.

Why do you want to go that difficult way of the cross and suffering and rejection and death to get it? I'll give it to you through a shortcut. And very often the devil comes to us and says, why do you have to go that difficult way of the cross? There are shortcuts, easy ways. Get the best of both worlds, a comfortable life here and eternal glory in heaven at the end.

The devil says, come to me, I'll give both to you. Why do you want to go that difficult way of suffering and rejection? Is it worth it? Many, many voices like this can come to you. Not now when you're young, you're zealous, full of devotion to the Lord and great vision for the future and all, but wait a few years and you will see these temptations coming your way.

And in that day, you must remember what you have heard today and fix your vision on Jesus and say, Lord, I'm not going to try and get the best of both worlds. I'm not going to live seeking comfort and ease and the glory and pleasures of this world. Whatever the price, I want to do your will.

I will say, get behind me, Satan, even if that voice comes from Peter, my closest co-worker. I will say, get behind me, Satan, the way of the cross is the only way for me. It came here directly from Satan.

Later on, it came from Peter. In both cases, the temptation was the same and the reply Jesus gave was the same. The temptation was avoid the way of the cross.

The reply was, get behind me, Satan. So remember that every voice that tells you to avoid the way of self-denial, to avoid the way of death to self, to avoid the way of the cross, to avoid the way of suffering is the voice of Satan. And if you recognize it, it may come directly from Satan, it may come from your closest co-worker and there you got to put your foot down and say, well, Peter, you can go that way if you want, but that's not the way for me.

I've got to go the way of the cross. You can never go astray if you choose the way of the cross. And so we see in the example of Jesus, a wonderful example for us to follow as our forerunner.

And it says the devil left him for a time, he came back again in other ways, but for a time he knew he was defeated. And I want to encourage you to look at the example of your Savior, who says to all of us, follow me. If you overcome as I overcame, every time he said it is written, if you overcome as I overcame, you will sit with me on my throne.

That's the hope we have. That's the joy set before us. And for that we endure the cross, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Let's pray. While our heads are bowed in prayer, I want to invite you again to respond to the word of God that you have heard and to say, Lord, I want to walk the way you went. I want to be an overcomer as you were an overcomer.

I want to have light on the wiles of the enemy. Protect me from deception, Lord. Save me from bypassing the way of the cross.

I want to go this way all my life. Heavenly Father, we thank you. You have not given us only exhortations, but you have given us an example.

And we want to walk in the footsteps of our Savior till the very last day of our life on earth. We humbly ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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