

Warfare (XI): Overcoming Temptations

I. Temptation from Selfish Desires

James 1:12-15, “each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”

- ◆ Where does temptation come from? It comes from selfish desires. So why is a person always tempted? It’s because he has a selfish desire, and this selfish desire is initially to pull you in and seduce you. If you start to accept it, you start to conceive, and conceiving gives birth to sin, and sin grows and gives birth to death.
- ◆ The author of the book *How Amazing! A Prison Testimony* writes that while in prison, she met some preachers who later denied Jesus, why? Because they had selfish desires, and they wanted to get out of jail quickly. At first, they just thanked Jesus for the food and prayed with their eyes open so that they wouldn’t be beaten. Little by little, they made concessions. If you took one step back, the devil would take one step forward, and if you took another step back, the devil would take two steps forward. Then they denied Jesus, and then they sued other preachers in order to get out of the prison earlier.

If we cannot prevail in the least temptation of life today, who can prevail in that great persecution?

1. Different Kinds of Trial

(1) Television

- ◆ A student who was preparing for a joint university exam cut off the TV plug to show his determination not to watch TV, but then he put it back on with the excuse that he was watching the news. We all give ourselves very legitimate reasons. For example, I watch TV because I want to learn English. But if we honestly go before the Lord and ask Him to shine on us, how much time do we spend on soccer matches and how much of our lives do we spend on TV? You need to discern if you are a slave to the TV or if you are watching a program to help with your ministry.
- ◆ Paul said, “*‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything.*” We can ask ourselves, “**Do you have the freedom not to watch television? Do I have to sit in front of this program to worship it? Do I spend more time worshipping God in my private life or worshipping the TV? Do I spend more time reading God's Word or listening to TV programs?**”
- ◆ The Sunday school teacher took a survey, “What is your dad’s favorite thing?” The children said, “Television.” In the eyes of the children, their dad does not love God, and he loves TV. You can’t love watching TV yourself, but tell your children to do their homework, or to read the Bible, or to pray. The children won’t listen to you because they think that their dad loves TV, so the children will think that TV is the most precious thing in their minds.

(2) Lust

- ◆ The Bible talks about not coveting the neighbor’s wife. At first, I just feel that another man's wife is much more gentle than mine, or that another man's husband is much more considerate than mine, so I like to communicate with him, about his family, his children, and his significant other. The more we communicate with each

other, the more things come to our hearts, and we like to eat with him. Then we begin to sin without knowing it.

- ◆ A brother who loved the Lord very much had just been married for a short time and was coming to the United States on a business trip. He said to his wife, “You have to help me not to be tempted.”

More and more I realize that those who know their own weaknesses and guard themselves against sinning will not sin, but those who think they can stand firm become weak and sin when they are tempted.

- ◆ If you don’t have anything to say to your significant other, but you can’t stop talking on the phone with another person of the opposite sex, you should be careful not to make your heart covet what is not yours. It is just a “want” at first, but when the opportunity arises, the want becomes an action.
- ◆ In 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul speaks of money and desires and reminds Timothy to flee from such things. When dealing with the opposite sex, if you are easily tempted, run away and don’t always walk on the edge of the cliff.
- ◆ For example, some brothers, as soon as they see a bad book, they immediately close it and say, “Lord Jesus, you keep my heart and mind.” As soon as you do that, the Lord will cleanse you.
- ◆ **If we know that we are weak in this area, it is all the more important that you ask the Lord to take your heart in this area, and to consecrate your feelings to the Lord.** If our emotions are deeply filled and satisfied by the Lord’s love, this temptation will be easy to shed.

(3) Gluttony

- ◆ Buffet is the devil’s trick in the last generation. Sometimes, in order to have a buffet at noon, you skip breakfast. Then you eat a lot of food at noon because you are very hungry and can eat so much that you don’t even need to eat dinner. After a few times, your stomach will have too much acid.
- ◆ It’s not that you can’t eat buffet, just don’t be greedy for a small advantage. You don’t have to pay for more buffet, but you will lose a lot of money and your health.
- ◆ **The problem of gluttony, in fact, you do not have to pay attention to being not greedy all the time—“I do not want to be greedy, I want to eat less.” As long as you pour out more of attention, your love, and your emotions on Jesus, this bondage will come off naturally.**
- ◆ For example, when Pastor Grace Chiang was in college, she had a craving for snacks for a while. Then when she read Proverbs, which says that “*put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite,*” she was shocked, and prayed to the Lord. She dared not to crave for snacks next time. However, the more she did this, the more she wanted to eat when she saw something. Then she pursued the Lord, and always longed for the Lord, and then she was attracted by the Lord, and always waited on the Lord. She didn’t pray for this craving specifically, but, without realizing it, she didn’t want to eat when she saw a snack. Since then, she has always been able to overcome this problem until now.
- ◆ Sometimes there is another reason for gluttony—persecution, **because you don’t have love. Sometimes if you don’t have love, you will go on eating.**

If we are more satisfied in the love of Jesus Christ, the bondage of gluttony will naturally fall away.

(4) Music

- ◆ We have heard so much music in the world that it has become a desire in us to dance to it, and in fact, popular music stirs your soul.
- ◆ After Pastor Grace Chiang was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit led her to pay attention to this weakness in her heart. In the past, when she got on a bus in Taiwan, the bus would play hot music. As soon as Pastor Chiang got on the bus, she started to fight all the way inside, praising the Lord, and saying to Him, “I love You,” all the time. She had to fight until she reached her destination to enter into God’s presence at the very beginning. But after a while, as soon as she got in the car, she was in the presence of God, and the music could no longer touch her heart.
- ◆ So the deeper the connection between a person and an aspect of the world, the stronger the temptation in him. If you don’t go into the inner life, you won’t realize the enemy, and you’ll get used to being with him.
- ◆ Just as the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, they were used to being enslaved. But after God begins to bring you into the beautiful land of Canaan (after being filled with the Holy Spirit), you begin to realize that there is this and that enemy inside, don’t want to be frustrated and feel terrible about yourself. In fact, these things are already inside of you. It’s just that you’ve already stepped on the beautiful land. But if you haven’t stepped on it, you wouldn’t be attacking the enemy. So if you don’t go into the tiger’s lair, how can you get the tiger’s son?

(5) Money

(A) 1 Timothy 6:9-10, Craving

- ◆ Is it bad to be rich?

It is not bad for some people to be rich, because money does not tempt them. They know that they are just stewards and are helping God with the money.

- ◆ Why does the desire to be rich lead to ignorance and harmful selfishness?

It is because when a man has money, he wants to buy a certain car or a certain house in the future, and he falls into many ignorant and harmful desires, which cause him to sink into destruction and perdition. Today I read in the newspaper that some people kill their parents because of greed for money, so it is said that the love of money is *a root of all kinds of evils*.

- ◆ What is the final result of craving? They pierced themselves with many pangs. Why?

No matter how much money you have, it often brings you nothing but misery, because you have to spend more effort on governance. You can see that many rich people are unhappy and have many family problems. If you have money, your children are often very ungrateful. They tend to take what they want, and they are not thankful for their parents and for God.

(B) What is the cure for the greed of money?

- a. 1 Timothy 6:6-8, “*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*”

- ◆ This tells us that the best way to escape the temptation to be greedy for money is to be godly and content, thinking that it is enough for me to be

clothed, fed, and healthy, and that I can't take anything with me anyway.

b. 1 Timothy 6:17-19, *Be generous and ready to share*

- ◆ God says that if He has given us more than enough, we are not to depend on this money, but on Him who gives us so much for our enjoyment.
- ◆ **God gives us comparative riches in order that we may do good and be rich in good works, not just in money.** On the one hand, we must be godly and content; on the other hand, we must always think of the needs of God's family, and be willing to give to others, so that we can hold on to the true life.

(C) Overcoming the temptation of money

- ◆ Money is neutral and not dirty, but it depends on who holds it.
- ◆ **It also depends on whether or not you will give out more money, or instead be bound and become a slave to money after God gives it to you,** which instead will pierce yourselves with many pangs.
- ◆ If we do not cast out the temptation at the beginning, then you will really become a slave to it.

For example, the first time Balaam took the money, he said, "No, no, no! No," but in his heart he really wanted the money, so the temptation came again, and Balaam was killed.

- ◆ We have to pay attention to **whether there is a greed for money in us, and if there is, we have to pay more attention to give it away.** Many times we make good excuses for ourselves, so we need to come into the light of God and pay attention to what is going on inside of us.
- ◆ **The enemy uses money to buy your heart, first to buy your desire to love the Lord, then to buy your sleep, and then to buy your whole soul.**

So we need to be aware that I am only a steward of money, and we need to always ask the Lord, "Lord, what are you going to do with this money? Tell me at any time, so that I don't miss your voice." This will save us from the temptation of money.

2. Victory over Temptation from Selfish Desires

Romans 8:6 *"For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."*

- ◆ When the Holy Spirit fills you greatly, the temptation is gone, but unless you continue to be filled richly and often, the temptation will come back as soon as there is some lack of vigilance in your life.

For example, a brother had a temptation that had been on him for several years. He had talked to his counselor many times, but he couldn't win. In the special gathering, he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and the temptation of the flesh was gone. But after some time, the temptation started on him again. He kept saying to the Lord, "Lord, I want to love you, not myself." After this, the temptation and weakness in him were completely removed.

- ◆ **When grace comes and the Holy Spirit fills you, there will be no temptation. But the real freedom from temptation and the real victory over you require**

you to choose with your will, “I don’t care about the body, Lord. I want to care about the Holy Spirit. Lord, I don’t want to love myself. I want to love you.” Temptation and the true shedding of weakness is a battle.

Love for Jesus is the greatest strength to overcome all temptations.

II. Temptations from the Enemy (Thoughts Shot in by the Enemy)

- ◆ There was a saint who, while preaching, suddenly had a lot of dirty thoughts in his head. He was in pain and couldn’t stand it several times, and then he felt that he had to get up to deal with it. Once he went to the river and proclaimed, “The victory of the Lord Jesus on the cross,” declaring that all these thoughts weren’t his, and then they suddenly disappeared.

Then the Lord showed him that those were thoughts shot in by the enemy. The enemy sometimes shoots in thoughts that are suspicious of other people and God, or dirty, yellowish thoughts. If the enemy shoots in, you don’t take it. We can’t stop the bird from flying over my head, but we can disallow it from nesting on our heads.

- ◆ The thoughts that the enemy shoots at you are like when you walk down the street and you hear a bad man talking. You can’t tell him not to talk, and you don’t sin when you walk by and hear it. But you sin when you stop walking and keep on listening to him. The more you listen, the more you chew on what he says, and you join in with what he is talking about.
- ◆ **You have to reject the thoughts coming in from the enemy** and rebuke him, “Step back, Satan! I know your tricks. I hate them.” Satan will not be able to deceive you anymore.
- ◆ **As soon as you accept the enemy’s thoughts, the devil has already won.** Once you accept them, you sin, and then you get frustrated, “How could I be so bad.” I’ve been pursuing this for so many years, and how could this happen? **Our frustration is the enemy’s power over us.**
- ◆ All discouragement comes from the devil, so don’t allow yourself to spend one minute in discouragement and self-accusation.

III. Hebrews 4:15-16 *“but one who in every respect has been tempted, yet without sin.”*

- ◆ Jesus could have been tempted in many ways, but He didn’t sin. So you don’t want to give in after a couple of battles against the temptation. Then you start to get discouraged.
- ◆ Our High Priest is the Lord Jesus, and He did not consider Himself, that’s why Jesus said, *“he [the devil] has no claim on me.”*
- ◆ When Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit urged Him to accept all the temptations that we have in the world, *the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life.* He did not sin. He prevailed, and the devil retreated. **Today we have a high priest, a life of sinlessness in us, so that we can overcome temptation and we are more than conquerors.**

IV. Conclusion

- ◆ **There are two kinds of temptation: one is the temptation of selfishness. If we love Jesus more and draw closer to God, you will find that those temptations will be less and less,** because you will be less and less tempted by selfishness, and so you will not be so easily drawn into temptation. **The other kind of temptation is the temptation that the**

enemy shoots at you, so you just have to keep rejecting and resisting those temptations.

If we are not able to overcome the temptations nowadays in America, and one day if we fall into a persecution like those Christians in Mainland China, we will not be able to stand.

- ◆ If we are always looking for comfort and taking care of our flesh, can't even stand to go hungry sometimes, don't have the will to suffer, or don't intentionally train ourselves when we are comfortable, I don't know how many of us will be able to stand when the persecution comes in later times. However, before the Lord comes again, Christians will have great persecution and sufferings. Whether we can stand or not depends on whether we have seriously risen up to overcome all the temptations in our lives.
- ◆ Let money, flesh, fame and position mean nothing to us. Jesus is all we have. Pray that the Lord would draw us more to love Jesus and stay connected to the Lord, because He can overcome the world and is more than a conqueror. Only such a person will be able to stand when the Lord comes again, so we need to be very honest and bring ourselves to God, "Lord, I really ask you to overcome all things in me. I don't want to be a slave to temptation anymore. Lord, you must be completely victorious in me."
- ◆ If you are attentive to overcome all the temptations of life, you will live a life of watchfulness and abiding with God. You will keep your mind and heart in the presence of God, which increases little by little. **How much God needs a group of overcomers in later times, who have nothing to fear but sin, and nothing to love but God.**

Warfare (XI) Assignment

1. James speaks of each one being tempted, but by what?
2. Do you have the freedom not to watch TV? Is the TV at home “holy to the LORD”?
3. The Sunday School teacher gave a survey, “What is your father’s favorite thing?” What were the children’s answers? Have you ever thought about what is most precious to you in children’s minds?
4. Are there any temptations in your life that you find most difficult to win? Are you discouraged by them?
5. What are the things in which you are often greedy? Greedy for food, greedy for bargains, greedy for money....
6. What is the cure for the greed of money?
7. If God makes us rich, what shall we do according to what He says (1 Timothy 6:6)?
8. If this temptation comes from selfish desires, what is the best way to overcome it? If it comes from the enemy, how do we overcome it?
9. Is temptation a sin?
10. What has helped you most with this tape?
11. Scripture memorization: Hebrews 4:15-16, James 1:12-15.