

*Bringing Purpose to
Temptation*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS
P.O. BOX 18715
BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

The Cross: It is what that Satan hates most, because it represents his ultimate defeat. It stands for the Finished Work, which Christ Himself completed at Calvary. Therefore, more than anything, Satan tries to make Christians avoid the Cross through his tool—temptation.

The devil tried to tempt Jesus repeatedly, working to get the Son of God to venture outside the will of the Father in His humanity. Jesus had to get to the Cross in order to win the victory. Satan, knowing that, did everything in his power to keep Jesus from it.

The Cross is the door to resurrection life. It is where Jesus conquered death and removed its sting. The grave can no longer claim victory, and we no longer have to live in fear, even of death.

Man was not created with an old sin nature. The sin nature began with Satan. When he seduced Eve into temptation, his purpose was to make man reveal the Fall. The purpose of resur-

rection, however, is so that men would reveal its redemptive power. In every situation, we are either revealing the Fall or we are revealing the resurrection power of redemption. We need to remember that in the details of life.

As this booklet will reveal, temptation was designed by the devil to keep us from seeing the victory of the Cross. Yet, when we respond to temptation with the Word of God as Jesus did in His humanity, we triumph, and Satan is forced to flee.

Chapter One

OUT OF THE CROSS COMES LIFE

Peter was with the other disciples in Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked them this question:

“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

“And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?”

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:13-18).

The “rock” refers to Jesus Christ. Peter was the movable yet living stone, but Jesus was the immovable stone—the spiritual Rock spoken of in 1 Corinthians 10:4. The Greek text reveals the difference between the two.

Next, Jesus said, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

“Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

“But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

“For what is a man profited; if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:19-26).

Why People Hate to Suffer

What was it that Peter did not want? Suffering. What is it that many Christians try to avoid? Suffering. Suffering is always related to Christ’s Cross and then to our Cross in identification with Christ whom the world hates (John 7:7; John 15:18). Peter did not want to have anything to do with suffering: “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

When Peter identified Him as *the* Christ, Jesus said He would have to suffer many things at the hands of the scribes, the chief priests, and the elders. At that moment, Peter took hold of Jesus, who was not facing him. The original text reveals that he literally took hold of Christ by the shoulder and rebuked Him for saying that He would suffer many things.

My experience in ministering is that most people hate suffering. We do not want to suffer.

A Christian author has said that America wants a God without wrath; man without sin. He said that most Americans want the administration of Christ without the Cross.

We must understand that the central theme of Christianity is the Cross. Out of the Cross comes life—eternal life, where we never die and where we will never face death, spiritually, in our souls. But it requires going *through* the Cross, where we must first suffer many things.

The Cross Brings Identification

Joseph de Veuster, a Belgian missionary priest, had a brother who was called to be a missionary in Hawaii. When his brother became ill, Joseph, known in his church as Father Damien, went instead to minister to a colony of lepers.

Preaching to them each morning and every afternoon, he would begin every message by saying, “My fellow brethren....”

One day, as he was preparing to preach, boiling water spilled on his feet, and he noticed that he couldn’t feel any pain. When it happened again, he knew in his heart that now he, too, had leprosy.

The next morning, this priest began his message by saying, “My fellow lepers....”

In losing our lives, we find Christ's life. Second Timothy 2:12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Notice, however, that the Bible also says that all who live godly shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

Chapter Two

SATAN'S GOAL:
TO CANCEL CALVARY

Using Peter, Satan tried to cause Christ in His humanity to fall. He did everything in his power against Jesus. In Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2, the Word of God clearly reveals that every day for forty days, Satan tempted Jesus. The temptation did not come just at the end of His fast. For forty days and forty nights the devil tempted Jesus. It is vital that we realize this.

In Deuteronomy 9:9, Moses fasted forty days. In 1 Kings 19:8, Elijah fasted forty days. Now we have a picture of the Savior, His body weak from hunger, and Satan said, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4:3).

Satan was trying to tempt Christ in His humanity to go outside of God's will for a provision—to become materialistic and to live outside of His relationship with the Holy Spirit.

But Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3: "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4).

Oh, if each of us would realize what temptation is all about! It is Satan's attempt to turn us toward natural provisions outside of the will of God in faith, to live outside of a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

No Time for Presumption

Next, Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. The Word of God says that He was placed at the very edge where He could have easily fallen off. Then, the devil misquoted Psalm 91:11-12: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6).

Jesus responded with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:16: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." In other words, Christ in His humanity would not falsely presume against the will of God. This time, Satan tried to tempt Jesus Christ in terms of His volition. Again, Jesus simply used the Word of God.

Then, in Matthew 4:8-9, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. The devil said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

The Word of God says that then the devil left, and the angels came and ministered unto Him (Matthew 4:11).

Tempted to Leave out the Cross

Through Peter, Satan tried to tempt the Son of God to make a decision to bypass the Cross. Many of us make choices where we are tempted to leave out Calvary.

When he rebuked the Lord, in Matthew 16:22, Peter was saying, "Avoid the Cross!"

In Genesis 6, fallen angels married women in an attempt to defile the purity of the seed of the woman and thereby do away with the pure humanity of Christ. In Matthew 8:23-28, demons tried to kill Jesus on the boat, again trying to get rid of the Cross.

Even while He hung on the Cross, those in

the crowd shouted, "If You are the Messiah, then save Yourself!" The chief priest, elders, and scribes mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross" (see Matthew 27:40-44). The whole point for Satan was to do away with the Cross.

The temptations of Christ were to cause Him to avoid the Cross, to take Him outside the Father's plan, and to get Him to miss His calling. The first temptation was to become materialistic outside of the provision of the Holy Spirit. The second temptation was to cause a wrong relationship with God's Word. The third was designed to take Him outside of the Father's plan regarding His calling.

Those were the devil's temptations, and there is nothing new about them—he has always been doing this. In these last days, we need to recognize one another as members of God's family. We must learn to appreciate our call to be members of the Body of Christ, fitly framed, every joint supplying the whole (Ephesians 2:21; 4:16). We need to count it a privilege to take up our Cross daily, having our flesh and affections crucified (Galatians 5:24). We need to begin to see that whatever suffering we go through, Jesus

Christ is present with us in it.

Truth governs our emotions and blesses our souls through the Cross. Resurrection life is revealed in the character of God by taking up the Cross. Every single day, everything that gives us life depends upon the Cross (Luke 9:23).

Chapter Three

THE CROSS LEADS TO RESURRECTION

Out of the Cross comes the supernatural resurrection of Christ. Out of the Cross comes the supernatural spiritual resurrection of the Christian (Romans 6:5). Out of the Cross come identification with His resurrection and fellowship with His suffering. Out of the Cross come all of these things. The Cross guarantees that a man who takes it up, believing in what it stands for, will never die.

A conservative Bible-believing doctor in Pennsylvania has told the story of how a little girl knocked on his door on a cold, blustery winter day. "My mother is dying. Can you come?" said the girl, who was dressed in an old coat and boots.

The doctor put on his coat and followed the girl. "Mommy is upstairs," she said when they got to the house.

He went up and ministered to the mother and said to her "If it wasn't for your daughter, you wouldn't have lived. But thanks to her coming to get me, we will be able to save your life."

"Daughter?" the woman said. "My daughter died three years ago. Her coat and boots are in the closet there."

The doctor looked, and there was the same old coat and same boots that the girl had been wearing. He saw a picture of the girl, and it was the same child who came to get him. How do you explain this? You can't. It is amazing. The little girl took the doctor to her mother's house and then disappeared.

Death is Merely a Shadow

The wife of a famous minister in Philadelphia died when she was very young. She was a beautiful lady, and after she went home to be with the Lord, their daughter asked her daddy, "If Jesus Christ died for our sins, then why do we have to die?"

"Honey, I am not ready to answer that," the minister said. "I am going to have to pray about it."

Three days later, they were riding in a car and came to a red light. A big tractor trailer

came past, blocked the sun, and cast a very large shadow.

“Honey, do you see that shadow?” the minister asked his daughter. “Would you rather have the tractor trailer or the shadow run over you?”

“The shadow,” she said.

Then he said, “Death is no more than a shadow. You are never going to die, and neither did your mommy die. She went to heaven to live with Jesus.”

Walking through without Fear

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil” (Psalm 23:4a).

“If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death” (John 8:51).

“Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:26).

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

Death Brings Passage

“Teach us to number our days” the Psalmist prayed (Psalm 90:12). For believers, death just means that we are “absent from the body, and ... present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). What a wonderful thing! We are on earth for such a short time. Therefore, we are to number our days. We are on earth to get saved, to know God, to reveal resurrection life, and to be conformed to His image. When it’s all over, we will spend eternity with God in a very beautiful position. We will be with Him in heaven forever—a gift we receive through the Cross of Calvary.

Hitler’s army was murdering people throughout Europe and Russia, and millions of Jewish people and Christians were killed, including a seven-year-old boy. As the boy lay dying, a German lieutenant screamed, “Where is your God now?”

An old bishop gave the answer: “He is right there beside him, waiting to take him to heaven this very moment to be with the angels. That is where!” And just as the angels came and carried away the born-again beggar (Luke 16:22), that is what happened to the boy. I am certain that the angels came for Stephen as he was being stoned,

and Jesus stood up at the throne of God to receive him (Acts 7:54-60).

“O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” The thing that we fear most—death—will be the greatest event of our lives as Christians in the will of God. Death makes us absent from the body and present with Jesus Christ and the angels. What an experience it will be to travel up through time and space and to be able to look down on the earth! And yet, with all that we go through down here, who would want to look back?

CONCLUSION

The temptations raged all around Christ, but Jesus always responded with “It is written.” Satan had to leave because he could not resist Jesus’ defense, which was the Word of God. Temptation, when answered properly, can help build spiritual muscles. It enables us to use the Word of God more skillfully.

As we glorify God and edify one another in the Body of Christ, we are part of a solution not part of the problem in this world’s system. If you are part of the problem, come to Christ, become involved with a Bible-believing church, and you will find the solution and become a part of it.

Satan is defeated on the death issue; he brings temptation after temptation, ultimately trying to make us fear death (see Hebrews 2:15). Now he can no longer hold it over our heads. The issues of death belong to God. The Scriptures clearly state that believers will not taste

death. And once we go through the shadows of death, Satan can no longer tempt us. Not that we should be reckless with our lives, but when we go up, he is through. Isn't that Good News? Don't misunderstand: I do not want to die. I want to live for as long as I can. But it is a great comfort to know that death has lost its sting.

Rejoice in that fact! Praise Him, and let all the angels and all of our loved ones in heavens see it.

Father, we thank You for Your divine covering and protection as we face temptations. And, as we exercise our faith fervently, may we grow in grace and knowledge and let the Cross release Your resurrection life. Let us live in divine decisions made through the wisdom of the Word of God. In Jesus' name, Amen.