

“Christ’s Victory over Temptation”—Matthew 4:10-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Christ’s Victory over Temptation”, is Matthew 4:10-11 → *Then Jesus said to the devil, “Be gone, satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

The most commonly known prayer throughout Christendom is the Lord’s Prayer. Whether used in worship services, at funerals or weddings, at various civil religious functions or other gatherings, you may hear people immediately pray it together out loud in unison when the words “Our Father” hit their ears. In the 6th petition of this prayer we pray, “and lead us not into temptation.” The meaning of this petition given in the Small Catechism says, “God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the

victory.” (Luther, Martin. Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation. © 2017 Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, MO, p. 22.)

Some people may take “win the victory” to refer to the end of life in this present world, either by Jesus’ 2nd Coming or by death, because of the words “that we may **finally** overcome . . .” This would be a natural conclusion since *one who has died has been set free from sin* (cf. Romans 6:7) along with all its affects and influence this side of Jesus’ 2nd Coming. But what about the struggles with temptation to sin in the meantime? Christians constantly experience the devil placing influences upon us from the world around us which serve as catalysts for our sinful heart to produce sinful acts (cf. Matthew 15:19). How do we deal with such constant temptation to sin? It’s difficult to depend upon analysis of the situation because many times we find ourselves deep into the sin very quickly, maybe even wondering how we got there since we “didn’t even see it coming.” It doesn’t feel possible to “win the victory” over temptations to sin this side of heaven much of the time. Maybe that’s why Jesus also commanded us to follow up this petition in the Lord’s Prayer with “but deliver us from evil.”

Matthew chapter four records Jesus’ temptation to sin when He was face to face with satan in the desert following His baptism. This time of testing for Jesus was also a part of the fulfilling *all righteousness*, to which He referred at His baptism (cf. Matthew 3:15). Being a type of the

Israelites, to whom God referred as His “son” (cf. Hosea 11:1), who wandered in the wilderness for forty years, Jesus, the Son of God, was in the wilderness for *forty days and forty nights*. Just as that time for them *in the wilderness* those *forty years* was to *humble* them, *testing* them *to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep* Yahweh’s *commandments or not* (cf. Deuteronomy 8:2), so this time with the devil in the wilderness was Jesus’ time of testing (cf. Luke 4:2). Actually, He fulfilled *all righteousness* again but doing what they could not do—that is, remain faithful to Yahweh by resisting temptation to sin.

The devil was rather crafty as always. Attacking Jesus at a time when He was weak according to His human nature *after fasting forty days and forty nights* (cf. Matthew 4:2), satan appealed to His hunger. However, Jesus refused to use His divine power for His own physical needs and simply relied on the written Word of God from the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Matthew 4:3-4). Recognizing the written Word of God as Jesus’ authority, the devil then quoted Psalm 91:11-12 in an effort to get Him to sin. However, Jesus refused to listen to the authority of God’s Word **when used improperly**, that is, in an effort to get Him to disobey God’s Word (cf. Matthew 4:5-7). Then satan tried to get Jesus to compromise His faithfulness to God and His plan of salvation by offering Him a shortcut to glory—an offer, by the way, which the devil himself would not even be able to make good (cf. Matthew 4:8-9). The devil truly is,

as Jesus referred to him later in His public ministry, *a murderer from the beginning . . . for he is a liar and the father of lies* (cf. John 8:44). Here he lied to Jesus in an effort to thwart His fulfilling *all righteousness* and kill our being restored into a right relationship with God forever. Again, Jesus clung to the written Word of God from the Old Testament Scriptures and said, *Be gone, satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."* (Verse 10)

Jesus won the victory over the devil and his temptations in the wilderness. Verse 11 of our text says: *Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him.* However, the temptations did not cease for Jesus. Luke 4:13 says: *And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him **until an opportune time**.* While there were many of those times throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, one which finds a direct connection to this temptation happened while suffering on the cross. Just as the devil had placed before Jesus the temptation to prove Who He was **on sinful terms** (i.e. *If you are the Son of God . . .*), so we hear those at the foot of the cross saying, *If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross* (cf. Matthew 27:42). The devil did not give up placing influences upon Jesus from the world in which He lived in an effort to get Him to sin and not fulfill *all righteousness* for us in victory.

This incident in Jesus' ministry places before us an important way in

which we too should resist temptations to sin. We too need to depend upon the **absolute authority** of God's *written* Word in the midst of this battle and satan's attacks upon us to sin. In fact, God's Word is mentioned as part of *the armor of God* which we are to *put on . . . to stand against the schemes of the devil* (cf. Ephesians 6:10-18). Ephesians 6:17 tells us to take up *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. This is the purpose for personal devotions in which you actually spend time reading God's written Word, the Bible. This is the reason you gather in worship which, from beginning to end, is hearing and speaking God's written Word as you receive the empowerment of His Holy Spirit through that Word and His Sacraments. This is the reason we join to study God's written Word with others. Psalm 119:11 describes the attitude: *I have stored up Your Word in my heart, O LORD, that I might not sin against You.*

Still, even with knowing God's Word, there are so many times when we give in to the devil's temptations and our own sinful desires. We are actually unable to take on the devil face to face and win. This is why there are so many times when we try to deal with the devil ourselves and fail. He uses these same temptations on us also, tempting us to put our physical needs above our spiritual needs; to act out of sinful pride and self-righteousness; to refuse to submit to the authority of God's *written* Word or compromise that Word; to doubt God's providence; to make

efforts to manipulate God rather than submitting to Him and His Will for our lives; and it goes on and on. Even with the knowledge of God's Word we give in to temptations to sin far too often. It's easy to see how this can lead people "into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice" with the temptation to give up on Jesus altogether.

Thank God that Jesus' victory over the devil's temptations to sin is not just an example for us sinners to try and follow. **Thank God that He won the victory for us already!** Jesus' encounter with satan also gives us strength and power to overcome satan in that He has overcome him **for us as He fulfilled *all righteousness***. This is why simply a knowledge of what Jesus did is not sufficient. Rather, it is **trusting in what He has done for you**. Jesus' face to face victorious confrontation with the devil was one more display that He has overcome satan **once and for all**, fulfilling *all righteousness* for you.

It is also an accomplished fact so that you can trust in your **only** hope to overcome the devil—**Jesus alone and *all righteousness* He has accomplished for you**. Thus, 1 John 5:4-5 says: *Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? That which is of the devil demands proof of Jesus being the Son of God. That which*

is of the Holy Spirit **believes** that *Jesus is the Son of God.*

We are called upon to watch out for the devil's attacks in spiritual warfare all the time. 1 Peter 5:8-9 says: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith.* Thus, the **only** way to resist or come out of temptation to sin is to look to Jesus' work for you, trusting in Him having **done it for you**. You cling to Him having defeated the devil throughout His whole earthly ministry and especially through His suffering, death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Colossians 2:15 says that *having disarmed the powers and authorities, God made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross of Christ (NIV).* Christ's victory over temptation is your victory now and into eternity by faith in Him. Amen.

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.
God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability,
but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape,
that you may be able to endure it.*

(1 Corinthians 10:13)

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