

Three Ways to Overcome Temptation

Psalms 119:9-11 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁹ *How can a young man keep his way pure?*

By keeping it according to Your word.

¹⁰ *With all my heart I have sought You;*

Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

¹¹ *I have treasured Your word in my heart,*

So that I may not sin against You.

Hebrews 4:12 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹² *For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Introduction

Today, I will wrap up my sermon on **temptation**. Last week, I identified the two primary sources of temptation: the human heart within and Satan, the tempter, from without. If you missed last week's message on the sources of temptation, I encourage you to revisit it—because today's tools respond directly to those sources.

I also talked about practical strategies for resisting temptation—which I call “shunning the bait.” These strategies include *fleeing from tempting situations, resisting the devil, and filtering our thoughts*.

This morning, I'll discuss three most powerful and effective defenses against temptation: God's Word, Prayer, and the Holy Spirit. More specifically, *storing up God's Word in our hearts, remaining devoted in prayer, and walking by the Holy Spirit*. If we put these principles into practice each day, we will live a victorious life in Christ, even in the face of temptation.

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Divine Help Available in Times of Temptation

In your battle with temptation, one thing you should never forget is that **you are never alone**. *God is with you. He has not abandoned you. He is with you. Right now. In this battle.* He cheers on you and equips you with everything you need to stand firm, overcome,

and live victoriously in Christ. It is never His will for you to be defeated, dejected, or downcast in your battle with temptation.

Three Resources God Provides

Scripture shows us three resources that God has given us to help us resist temptation and break free from its grip:

1. **The Word of God** = Foundation and Sword
2. **Prayer** = Presence and Glory
3. **The Holy Spirit** = Power and Transformation

Now, Let's look at the **first** of our three weapons—the **Word of God**.

As Psalm 119:11 says, *"I have hidden **your word** in my heart that I might not sin against you."* Please get this: the Word of God stored up in our hearts keeps us from sinning against God and others. God's Word is not just for our information or head knowledge—it is for our *protection*. It gives us *wisdom and power* to resist temptations. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Proverbs 2:7: *"(The Lord) stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity."* I always wondered how God provides His sound wisdom for my daily life. Now, I get it. Through His Word stored up in my heart. It is His job to make His Word available, and it is my job to store it in my heart. When we neglect Scripture, we deprive ourselves of the wisdom and strength God provides.

Let me share my testimony with you. Indeed, storing God's Word in my heart provides practical help in times of temptation. Psalm 16:7–8 says, *"I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. **I keep my eyes always on the Lord.** With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken"* (NIV). It is God's will for me to keep my eyes always, both in good times and in bad times, on Him.

This verse has helped me in my upsetting moments. My mind was consumed by the problem. My attention was fixed on the problem. This verse gently shifts my focus from the problem to the Lord—and as I do, the problem shrinks, and God becomes greater in my sight. Peace and trust are restored. Indeed, His Word provides a heavenly perspective. It grounds us in truth and peace when temptation pulls us away from God. This verse will also work in moments of temptation. Move your eyes from the temptation to the Lord.

A powerful Example Is Jesus Himself.

When faced with temptation, Jesus our Lord didn't rely on emotion, willpower, or debate—He used the **Word of God** to defeat the tempter. As recorded in Matthew 4, the devil tempted Him three times, and each time Jesus responded the same way: *"It is*

written...” In the throes of temptation, He stood firm by quoting Scripture, and the enemy had no answer.

Why does this matter? Because **God’s Word works**. God’s Word is “*the sword of the Spirit* (Ephesians 6:17)—the only offensive weapon in our spiritual battle with the devil. When used properly, God’s Word doesn’t just defend us; it strikes back.

The devil fears the Word of God because it cuts through his lies and exposes his schemes. Consider how Hebrews 4:12 describes its power: “*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*”

God’s Word isn’t static—it’s alive and dynamic. And when you wield it in moments of temptation, you stand in the strength and authority of Christ Himself.

The real question is: is the Word of God well stored in your heart to use against the tempter in moments of temptation? Are you diligent about storing up God’s Word in your heart in peaceful times? Or is your heart pretty much empty and no stock of God’s Word?

So, we’ve seen the power of God’s Word. Now let’s turn to our second divine weapon—**Prayer**.

Prayer is one of the most powerful ways to resist and overcome temptation. Take Jesus, for example. The night before His crucifixion, He faced intense temptation—the temptation to turn away from His mission and avoid the suffering of the cross. At that moment, He prayed to the Father, “*Abba, Father... take this cup from me*” (Mark 14:36).

Not once, but **three times**, Jesus poured out His heart in prayer (Matthew 26). And through that time of deep communion with the Father, He overcame the temptation. The next day, He willingly obeyed and went to the cross to accomplish God’s plan for our salvation.

The same Jesus calls us to do the same. He said, “*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41, NIV). He commands us to be devoted to prayer, being watchful and thankful (Colossians 4:2). Do you obey His commands? Do you watch and pray?

Please understand the spiritual dynamics at play here. When we stay alert and commit ourselves to prayer, God’s presence gets stronger in our hearts. When our hearts are filled with God’s presence and His glory, they become the strongest defense against the tempter. Prophet Isaiah declares: *His glory is our defense!* (Isaiah 4:5). When we are covered with God’s glory and brilliance in prayer, the tempter won’t dare to tempt us. In our

moments of weakness— His presence pushes back the power of the tempter. Prayer doesn't just prepare us for battle; **it keeps us standing strong in the glory of God.**

The Lasting Power of God's Word and Prayer

At the heart of it, the greatest benefit of immersing ourselves in **God's Word and prayer** is that they **strengthen and secure our inner life**—building a solid defense against temptation.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, *“(Temptation) has a much better chance of success when the man's whole inner world is drab and cold and empty.”* In other words, when our hearts are spiritually dry, unguarded, or filled with fleshly desires, and we have no Word of God stored, the enemy finds an easier target. When we neglect our inner world, our resistance is at its weakest, and we become most vulnerable to the enemy's temptations.

However, when we regularly feed our hearts with God's truth and remain anchored in prayer, we build a spiritual fortress against the tempter. These habits don't just inspire us—they **fortify** us. They fill our hearts with warmth, light, truth, and strength—so that when temptation comes, it finds **no room to settle and no weakness to exploit.**

Be Alert to Another Subtle Temptation: Neglecting the Divine Means to Fight Temptation

One of the devil's most deceptive strategies is to tempt us **not to fight**—to neglect the very tools God has given us to resist temptation. George Müller once observed:

“It is a common temptation of Satan to make us give up the reading of the Word and prayer when our enjoyment is gone; as if it were of no use to read the Scriptures when we do not enjoy them, and as if it were no use to pray when we have no spirit of prayer.”

This is a trap we must not fall into. Even when we don't feel like reading or praying, **those are the moments we need them most.** In dry seasons and weary seasons, when it feels routine or lifeless—*hold fast.* Keep showing up. Keep digging into God's Word. Stay disciplined in prayer. Because these disciplines are not about our emotions; they're about our **lifeline** to God's strength and presence.

Finally, let's consider the third divine weapon: **The Holy Spirit.**

In our battle against temptation, we are never left to fight alone. The **Holy Spirit** is our resident helper, strengthening us in our weakness and interceding on our behalf. As Romans 8:26 says: *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”* (NIV)

Not only does the Spirit pray for us—but He also empowers us to overcome the pull of our sinful nature—called ‘flesh.’ In fact, the Spirit is the one who **puts to death the flesh** in us. I call the Holy Spirit: *the Flesh Slayer!* If you want victory over temptation, you must learn to **walk by the Spirit**. Galatians 5:16–17 puts it this way: “*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other...*”. Let me briefly tell you what it means to walk by the Spirit.

To walk by the Spirit is to be in **ongoing fellowship** with Him—sensitive to His guidance, aware of His presence, and responsive to His voice.

It also means **saying “yes” to God’s desires** and “no” to the cravings of our sinful nature (“the flesh”). The Spirit and the flesh are in conflict—walking by the Spirit means choosing the Spirit’s influence daily over the desires of the flesh.

Paul the Apostle describes the contrast between a life controlled by the flesh and a life led by the Spirit. The works of the flesh—sexual immorality, jealousy, selfish ambition, and more—lead us away from God. When we walk by the Spirit, we begin to reflect the **character of Christ** through the “fruit of the Spirit”—**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control** (Galatians 5:22-23).

Finally, walking by the Spirit means *relying on His power rather than on our own willpower* to live a holy and fruitful life.

Don’t forget: walking by the Spirit is not a one-time decision—it’s a **moment-by-moment posture of surrender** and trust. It includes listening, obeying, repenting, and resting in His grace throughout each day.

To resist temptation, we don’t just say “no” to sin—we say “yes” to the Spirit. And when we walk closely with Him, the Spirit transforms us into Christ’s image that overpowers the old self. Victory over temptation doesn’t come from trying harder—it comes from walking closer with Jesus, who already overcame.

Therefore, clothe yourself with this threefold defense—**God’s Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit**. When you walk in the strength of these divine resources, you will overcome temptation and live a life of victory.

Conclusion

Temptation is real. But so is God’s help. **Flee from tempting circumstances. Resist the devil. Filter out** the thoughts from the enemy. **Guard your heart and mind** through the Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. Victory comes not by willpower, but by **Spirit power**.

Action Plan:

- So this week, memorize Psalm 119:11 and meditate on it each day.
- Set aside 10 minutes each morning to pray before your day begins.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you today, and pause when you sense His prompting.
- Journal your victories and struggles with temptation daily.

Amen.