

## Overcoming temptation when it comes knocking at your door Matthew 4:1-11

I begin this morning with a modern day parable told by Reinhard Bonnke: A man had a 2-storey house. He heard a knocking, opened the door, and found Jesus there, so he invited Him to live in the house and gave Him a room in the top floor. Now Jesus will only take what you give Him. The man was sleeping and heard a pounding on the door, opened the door a crack and the devil barged in. He had a terrible fight, trying to resist the devil and his temptations, yelling out for help all the time. Eventually, he managed to throw the devil out. In the morning, he said, "Why didn't you help me last night? Couldn't you hear me calling for help?" Jesus replied. "The problem is, you've got this whole big house to yourself, and I've only got one room." "Ah, I see your point" said the man. "Well, you can have the whole top floor, and I'll keep the bottom floor." The next night the man was sleeping and heard a pounding on the door, opened the door a crack and the devil barged in again. He had another terrible fight, trying to resist the devil and his temptations, yelling out for help all the time. Eventually, he managed to throw the devil out. In the morning, he said, "Why didn't you help me last night? Couldn't you hear me calling for help?" Jesus said, "The problem is, I have the top floor, but you still have the bottom floor to yourself." "Ah, I see what you mean," said the man. "From now on, the whole house is yours." That night, the man was asleep, and there was a pounding at the door again. This time Jesus went to the door, opened it wide, and stood in the doorway. The devil looked at Him, bowed very low and said, "I'm sorry, but I think I knocked on the wrong door."

The British Bible Teacher Derek Prince once asked an old lady what the secret to her tremendously victorious Christian life was. Her reply was this, "Every time Satan knocks at the door, I let Jesus answer."

A Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit where God's presence comes to dwell when we believe in and receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. God's spirit lives in us to testify to ours that we are his children and have the gift of eternal life. The spirit leads us to worship God in Spirit and in truth as we seek to follow Jesus as his disciple's every day. However, this state of spiritual being does not prevent us from being put to the test every day of our lives. That is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray

together “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil [the evil one].” The test comes in the form of temptation that appears when the devil comes knocking at our door. Our story from scripture where Jesus is tested in the wilderness reveals to us that ‘Temptation Is Tailored to the Individual’. Satan’s basis for temptation was unique to Jesus because Jesus was a unique person in the situation of having just been baptised, anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit to equip him for his earthly ministry.

The first thing God does is to test Jesus at the beginning of his ministry to demonstrate that he truly was the Son of God, who unlike the first Son of God Adam, would not fail or fall. So, he is lead into the wilderness to fast for 40 days and nights. Stating that he was then hungry has got to be one of the bibles greatest understatements. It is only then that the tempter, the great archenemy of God and leader of the forces of darkness and evil comes calling at Jesus’ home in the desert seeking to manipulate, even attempting to control and dominate the Son of God. Satan, the devil knew Jesus and what his situation was, just as he knows ours as believers and has a unique tailored plan for each one of us to tempt us and bring us down by falling into sin, usually in areas of our lives that we are already weak.

We learn from Jesus’ testing trial and encounter with the devil that Temptation Can Be Resisted by Scripture. We have heard that Jesus appealed to Scripture in all three temptations, which is perhaps the weapon Satan fears more than anything else in this world. This was a fight and Jesus pulls out the two edged Sword! It is interesting to note that the Greek word for mouth in v.4 ‘*stoma*’ as if a *gash* in the face, also specifically means, the edge of a weapon such as a sword.

The apostle Paul picks up on this double meaning I believe when he wrote of the spiritual battle that takes place against evil in the spiritual realms in **Ephesians 6:10-17**:

Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to

stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

The devil both knew and quoted God's Word, but so did Jesus. All His retorts that day were quoted from the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy 6 and 8. Now it has been very hot and humid lately, almost oppressive whether you are trying to rest during the day or sleep at night. Perhaps you have even thought of the phrase to describe the climate as, "the atmosphere is so heavy, you could cut the air with a knife". Well this what Jesus did that day in the spiritual sense as the Word of God himself speaking the very word of God, in what we might consider a tense situation, he certainly cut through the devil's false and twisted take on scripture with the sword of the spirit, the Word of God. And this is what we can do too as we are tested when the devil comes to tempt us and we experience the tension of the spiritual atmosphere that is created when temptation arrives and is knocking at our own door.

The primary application of this for our own lives is that we also should learn and know the Word of God, in order to use Scripture to resist temptation. The devil hates Scripture and attacks it. So, you and I need to know and memorise the Word of God because it serves as a weapon in the fight against sin and temptation when known and stored away in your heart and even more deeply in your spirit, so that it can be recalled for future use as the sword of the spirit. We also have the Word to literally turn to when we pick up our bibles, turn the pages and read from it, meditate on it, in order to remind ourselves of God's truth especially, when as part of the natural aging process the power of our memory begins to fade. You and I require the truth to reside in our hands, opening up and holding your bible, in our heads- which is our thinking, in our hearts to govern our faulty human reasoning and most importantly in our spirit's if we are going to resist temptation in the spiritual battle against sin. This is what the Psalmist was alluding to when he said in **Psalm 119:11**

"I have hidden your word [That is the Lord's law and promises] in my heart that I might not sin against you."

The correct response to the trial of temptation is, to quote Jesus Christ, none other than the Word of God himself according to John [1:1-5]. Jesus said three times, "It is written". This is the best start according to Jesus of how to address Satan the lying, slandering and murdering accuser who as our enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. We are to resist him by standing firm in the faith [1 Peter 5:8,9], with what Jesus said and what the truth of God's Word says, not what anyone else believes or says, even if they've come up with and written down their own philosophies and beliefs and gained followers as a result.

The world is full of many different streams of thought, philosophy, religion and spirituality. This shows itself when the likes of the Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons come knocking at your door or you meet someone who belongs to a society like the masonic lodge. Our default as believers will always be the Word of God, not someone or something else's made up beliefs and ruminations.

The responsibility to know and believe the Word of God, God's full written counsel from Genesis 1:1 to Revelations 22:21 rests in your own lap. God's Word, what is written, and incidentally what is not to be added to, is the genuine article, so spend time with it to get to know it. And as we do the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth acts our teacher and guide.

When we have this truth residing within and dominating us, and with Jesus as our example then the effect of the Word of God, spoken in faith and belief by a child of God sends the devil away when you tell him to go! Satan cannot handle the truth spoken in faith and belief, as it is written, by a believing child of God.

We are put to the test each and every time that Satan comes knocking at our door to tempt us to sin. Our greatest strength is to be so full of God's spirit of truth through his word that we let Jesus open the door for us. In order for this to happen we each face this morning the personal challenge of recognising our utter dependence on God's word, more than food, than worldly wealth, power and knowledge, in order to prove ourselves daily as obedient followers of Christ, loyal to our king and his rule and reign over the universe and our lives. This is how we can be equipped to live a victorious life in Christ in which we overcome the test and trial of temptation when it comes knocking at our door because it is

always Jesus then who is there to meet and greet it and send it away.