

SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

EVER SINCE Eve chatted with the serpent at the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, temptation has been a major problem in Christian living. Temptation is the suggestion or the thought of doing something that we know to be wrong or sinful.

Temptation is not sin. James says that when enticement from without unites with desire from within, then sin is conceived. How might you and I successfully resist or overcome temptation? First, we should avoid places where temptation is likely to assail us. A boy stood by a fruit stand so long that the owner finally asked him, "What are you trying to do - steal some fruit?" The little fellow straightened himself up to his full height and replied "No, sir, I am trying not to."

The lad was so valiantly trying to resist the temptation to steal fruit. Nevertheless, he was courting temptation by remaining so close to it. Inasmuch as he purposed not to steal, he would have been wiser had he resolutely stayed away from the fruit stand.

It was Ruskin who appropriately said, "No one can ask honestly and hopefully to be delivered from temptation unless he has honestly and firmly determined to keep out of it."

One method of resisting temptation was demonstrated by Joseph in Egypt. When Potiphar's wife suggested an immoral act, he ran away from her. That may appear cowardly. We might wonder why Joseph did not stay and correct her thinking, inasmuch as her thoughts were running in wrong channels. But he knew better than to argue with the woman, no doubt attractive and seductive. As quickly as possible, he wanted to get away from her influence. Thus he wisely ran from her presence. (Genesis 39:12.) If Eve had run when she first heard the serpent's doubt-laden question in the garden, she, too, would have been victorious.

When temptation comes through an individual, let us run away from it, regardless of whom it comes from. One has said, "If you choose the society of those who are the enemies of Christ, do you expect God to work a miracle to keep you from yielding to them?"

Another method of overcoming temptation is suggested by Paul in Romans 13:14, where he bids us to "make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Near Peter's home was a big swimming hole, where the boys of the neighbourhood gathered to swim. Peter's mother had ordered him not to go there unless an adult accompanied him, because the hole was deep. One day Peter came home with his hair all wet. His mother could see that he had been in the water, so she asked, "Peter, have you been swimming in the hole? Didn't you remember that Mother told you not to go there?"

But Mother - it was this way. I was by the pool, and I so much wanted to go in swimming with the other boys, I couldn't help myself."

"But, Peter, how did you happen to have your swimming togs along with you?"

"Oh, Mother, I had taken them along just in case I might be tempted."

Quite often you and I act just as foolishly. Even though we know what is right and what we ought to do, we occasionally do not follow that course in a clear-cut way. Often we make provision for something that we know to be wrong, just as Peter did.

Jesus in the wilderness showed us a method of overcoming temptation. Every time temptation ventured a subtle attack, Jesus threw it back in reeling defeat by using the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Ephesians 6:17. Jesus had stored Bible

texts in his mind, and regardless of the particular temptation presented, he combated it with the sharp, two-edged sword of the Word of God. All the scriptures Jesus employed came from the Book of Deuteronomy: namely, those found in Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; 6:13. There was not one weak point in the armour of Jesus. He had an answer to every insidious temptation.

Jesus' victory in the wilderness is a pattern for you and me to follow that we might be victorious over temptation. We, too, should hide the Word of God within us that we might have weapons with which to resist sinful enticements. We must plant the Word of God in our minds. It is advisable to memorize specific texts as Jesus did so that we will be prepared to meet and defeat temptation when it comes.

The following texts may prove helpful in meeting certain temptations. If we are prone to cherish grudges, then let us repeat Philippians 4:4, which says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." We cannot rejoice in the Lord and simultaneously cherish resentment. Joy in the Lord will oust every grudge from our hearts. If someone tries to entice us to do something wrong by appealing to the standard argument that "everybody does it," then use the words found in Exodus 23:2: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Philippians 4:8 will help us to resist sinful thinking and contemplate noble themes, as it admonishes: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Are you beset with fear of failure? Then read Isaiah 50:7: "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

You and I must analyse our individual needs, find the texts which help us with our personal problems, and then deliberately place these helpful texts in our memories. In time of need the Holy Spirit will bring these texts to our remembrance that we may defeat temptation. The Psalmist experienced such help, for he said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11. If we follow this example, ours is the promise, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Isaiah 59:19. Another has wisely said, "There will grow in the fruitful mind a familiarity with divine things that will be as a barricade against temptation.

As we follow the suggestions from the Word of God that we should run away from evil; stay away from the place of temptation; make no provision for the weakness of the flesh; arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit; not flout with sin; and fix our eyes steadfastly on Jesus, we shall not fail. We have this assurance from God in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.