

HOW TO WIN OVER THE DEVIL

Matthew 4:1-11

By Pastor Don Ginkel

Is it really true that the devil has enormous influence in the lives of people? He seems to be able to make things go wrong so often. He seems to be able to take the wind out of people's sails and place them in very depressing situations. This morning we want to learn HOW TO WIN OVER THE DEVIL. First we need to establish —

I. Who the Devil Is

The devil was created as a good angel and lived in heaven with all the angels before the fall. He was given free choice to obey or not obey God. Somehow, in some way, Satan turned on God in heaven and desired the glory that God had for Himself. The result is that Satan was thrown out of heaven together with all the angels who followed him.

They were damned instantly and were never given another chance to change. That's God's judgment on them. So now the devil has launched an all-out attack on people, deceiving them, lying to them, tricking them, persuading them, bargaining with them, so that people like you and I will spend eternity in total damnation.

Jesus was the only Person who ever overcame the devil. All other people have failed. The devil is the second most powerful being in existence. Christ is first. The life that we are now leading will finally end in the hands of No. 1, Jesus Christ, or No. 2, the devil. We have no other choices.

Listen to the comparisons:

- Both Christ and the devil are powerful.
- Both Christ and the devil can dominate your life.
- Both Christ and the devil have put their lives on the line to win you.
- Both Christ and the devil have a plan for your life.
- Both Christ and the devil promise you a kingdom if you follow them.

II. The Devil's Use of Doubt

What was the devil's approach to Jesus? We read in Matthew 4:3, "The tempter came to Him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'" In verse 6 we read, "'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw Yourself down. For it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" And in verse 9, "'All this I will give You,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'" What was the devil trying to do? To get Jesus to doubt that He was the Son of God.

When the devil approached Eve for the first time he said, “Are you sure God said you **shouldn’t** eat of the fruit of that tree?” When the devil tempted Peter he said, “Peter, are you sure God will protect you if the soldiers find out you are a follower of Jesus?” The devil is a master at raising doubts.

We become seriously ill, and we wonder who is really in control. What if I get a heart attack? Can my family survive? What if I lose my job? God says He will take care of His people, but, yet, why the sickness, why the accident, why the unfortunate circumstances — especially why do they happen to us who are Christians? Is God really in control?

III. His Timing

One of the tricks of the devil is that he tries to hit us the hardest after a spiritual high. A spiritual high is when you’ve had some real blessings in your life, and you are really excited. You come to a meaningful church service, the Word really speaks to you, and you leave feeling higher than a kite. You attend a spiritual retreat that really lifts you up, and you are on cloud nine. Those spiritual highs seem to be a challenge to the devil.

This happened to Jesus. He had just been baptized in the Jordan River. This was a high point in His life. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father had spoken from heaven saying, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16). Then the Bible tells us that Jesus was led out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Notice the temptation followed the spiritual high.

Eve had a real high — everything was perfect. The devil tempted her; she fell. Peter had a real high after boasting that he would never let the Lord down, even if everyone else did. He was tempted; he fell. The point is this: The devil considers the spiritual high of an individual as challenging ground for temptation.

Has this happened to any of you? You have a wonderful experience with the Lord, and then, all of a sudden the devil brings something into your life and you fall. And for the moment he wins. You begin to doubt God’s promise of victory. You begin to wonder if you are really a Christian. You question God’s mercy. What can you do?

IV. The Use of God’s Word

Let’s see what happened in our text. See how the Lord responded to the devil in each of the three attacks.

- Verse 4, “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”
- Verse 7, “Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written, `Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”
- Verse 10, “Jesus said to him, ‘Away from Me, Satan! For it is written: `Worship the

Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”

That Word of God quoted by Jesus had an effect on the devil that could be accomplished by nothing else. It stifled him. It stopped him. It gave Christ the victory. No other person has ever had that ability. No other person has ever even had the nerve to try to speak back to the devil. Christ did! And He won!

You can win, too, through that same Word. Acts 2:42 says, “They (the early Christians) devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship.” These early Christians met every day for Bible study and fellowship. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” Hebrews 10:25 says, “Let us not give up meeting together (around the Word), as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day (Judgment Day) approaching.”

One of the things that our congregation will never do and that is to become legalistic; however, in view of the passages we just read I want to encourage you as your friend and pastor to strive for at least three simple goals in your life concerning the Word.

GOAL # 1: Strive for every Sunday worship. Do not skip. If you are out of town, try to find a church that preaches the Bible. If you are on vacation, do the same. Nadine and I will be on vacation the third Sunday in May. She has already made arrangements for our worshiping at a certain church **where we’ll be spending the week**. She has the address and time of worship. You can do the same. Don’t skip being in fellowship when believers gather around the Word on the Lord’s Day.

GOAL # 2: Strive to have daily Bible study at home. I suggest the use of Portals of Prayer. We use it every evening after dinner. May I nudge your flesh a little on this? If you’re too busy to have daily Bible study you’re just too busy. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Note: Pastor, have your ushers hand out a copy of *“Portals of Prayer”* to each family as they enter the sanctuary) Remember, you don’t have to have daily devotions, but I hope you will. It will really help you grow spiritually.

GOAL # 3: Strive to attend a weekly Bible study, either our adult Bible class on Sunday morning, or one of our home Bible study groups.

I would also like to take each of you through a special ten week Bible study course, I Have Good News For You, which we will begin on Sunday evenings starting next Sunday (Pastor, hold up a copy of *“I Have Good News for You”* and consider placing a Good News Flyer in each bulletin). A half million people have gone through this course here in the States and worldwide. I would be privileged and honored to walk through this Bible study with you. **Again, you don’t have to do this, but I hope you will. It will bless us in a mighty way.**

Now let’s wrap this up. This week there are two plans drawn up for you.

Plan No. 1 has been drawn up for you by God Himself. It is a plan that will bring real joy and real pleasure into your life. This plan is presented to you in the Word of God.

Plan No. 2 comes from the gates of hell. It will not lead you into God's Word. It will lead you to the devil's word. He will use everything imaginable to get you out of God's Word and into his. Even though Plan No. 2 may seem attractive at times, it will ultimately bring you despair.

Both plans will be presented to you each day this week and for the rest of your lives. One plan will be presented to honor yourself and the other plan to honor God and someday take you to heaven. You need to know that.

You need to know that you may say to the devil in the name of Jesus, "Go away Satan. Leave me alone. I am God's property. I have been purchased by the blood of Christ. I am His now. And I will be forever!"

Let's pray: Dear Jesus, we thank You for Your great victory over the devil who tempted You soon after Your Baptism. Unlike Adam who went down to defeat in the Garden and brought sin upon all men, You remained steadfast and conquered. Lord, teach us to resist him, too. How often we are tempted. And, sad to say, how often we yield to his temptations. Instead of following Your example we follow Adam's example. Help us to read our Bibles daily, to study Your Word in Bible study groups with other believers, and to be faithful in Sunday worship. We want strength to resist Satan, and, when our last hour comes, we want You to take us to our heavenly home where there will be no more temptation to sin. In Your name. Amen.