**YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION (#1)**

***Bear One Another’s Burden***

“Oh that a hand would come down from heaven and deliver me from my besetting sin!”
 - Seneca (Roman stoic philosopher, teacher of Emperor Nero)

Is it just me, or do you also have a daily battle with temptations? Of course, you don’t have to answer that. I already know the answer. So do you. We all live in a broken, sin-cursed world that is forever drawing us like a powerful magnet in a room full of loose screws. Gravitational pull is not only in the natural world, it is in the spirit world as well. We all feel the constant grip of sin around our throats that threatens to strangle us. O how I long to finally leave this world and be far away from the ever present threats of Satan. The devil just won’t leave me alone. I’m so sick of him, and so tired of temptation. Do you feel the same?

It seems even the great saint Paul, that paragon of virtue and integrity, felt the same struggles between flesh and spirit. His famous quote in Romans 7 has been the subject of much controversy over the past two millenniums, but it is worthy of wrestling with again. He said in vss. 22-24,

*22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Can you not hear the agonizing cry of a man torn between heaven and earth? Some think he was just talking about his pre-conversion struggles and now reveals his triumphant present and future with his answer in verse 25,

*25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Others, including myself, believe that when he then added the last phrase to the verse (“*So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin”)* he revealed he was still dealing with an epic spiritual war. However, he tells us he powered through these struggles by God’s grace and his faith, knowing he would ultimately triumph (“*I thank God – through Jesus*”).

Let me ask you, have you ever personally met a man or woman in the Lord’s church who felt invincible, totally beyond the reach of Satan and sin? Yea, me neither. Oh, were they confident in God’s love and help? Yes!!! But were they resistant to temptation? Never!!! We all instinctively know that no one has ever “arrived.” No one, no, not one, has escaped the ever-present pull of temptation’s gravity. It’s relentless. So, in Romans 7, we see Paul describing that global world war between our flesh and spirit.

He drives home the same colossal battle we fight everyday in Galatians 5:16 through 6:5 (note: I regret there was a chapter division here, for it chops up the context). Paul says, while speaking in the present tense, that “*the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish*.” Then, after listing the *Works of the Flesh*, followed by the *Fruit of the Spirit*, and the need to “*crucify the flesh with its passions and desires*,” he then progresses to Christians who have been “*overtaken in any trespass.*” He tells them to seek help from “*you who are spiritual*” in order to find forgiveness and restoration.

In seeking to “*crucify the flesh with its passions and desires*” we have to know the weapons God has given us to fight this non-stop war. Satan never calls for a cease-fire, does he? We never get a vacation from his temptations, do we? There never seems to be even a day off from the “*fiery darts of the wicked one*” (Eph. 6:16), does there?

So as the devil attacks us with bullets and bombs we jump into our fox hole and return fire with all the weapons God has put into our arsenal. Do you know what these weapons are? If you don’t want to be wounded, or killed, you must become so familiar with your God-issued spiritual weapons that they are second-nature to you. Almost sub-consciously, like breathing or blinking, you reach for these weapons when under fire.

A combat veteran of war knows his weapons like the back of his hand (for instance, he is trained to disassemble and reassemble his rifle blind-folded, then take aim and fire five rounds into a moving target, all in just seconds). Just so, soldiers of Christ become so at ease, so natural, with “*the armor of God*” (Eph. 6:10-17) that we instinctively know how to defend ourselves (“*the shield of faith*”), or to return fire (“*the sword of the Spirit*”).

A Christian must never see himself as a helpless victim against “*the wiles of the devil*” (Eph. 6:11). We have too many advantages God has given us to feel helpless and hopeless against the Tempter. One such weapon at our disposal is our fellow soldiers.

Returning to Galatians 6:1-5 we see we are to “*bear* ***one another’s*** *burdens*.” Here is where the vast majority of us falter and fail, often fatally. We too often fight our battles alone, never seeking help from our brethren-in-arms. Just as the military trains its soldiers in survival tactics by developing an ***esprit de corps*** (French for “the spirit of the body”), so God has put into our training manual the constant drumbeat of “ONE ANOTHER.” Look it up, it’s found 100 times in your New Testament! Take ten minutes to read all these scriptures, then jump in that fox hole and cover your buddy’s back.

Jn. 13:34; Rom. 12:10,16; Rom. 14:19; Rom. 15:5,7,14; Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 12:25; Gal. 5:13; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:2,32; Eph. 4:15,25; Eph. 5:19, 21; Phil. 2:3,4; Col. 3:13,16; I Thess 4:18; I Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13; Heb. 10:24; I Pet. 4:9,10; I Pet. 5:5; Jam. 5:16

There are many hymns I sing to myself often to give me greater faith and courage. But one that I sing a lot – and I mean a LOT! – is *Yield Not To Temptation*. As Satan tempts us, sing it in that fox hole with your fellow soldiers:

**Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin; Each victory will help you, some other to win.
Fight manfully onward; Dark passions subdue, Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.**

**To him that o’er cometh, God giveth a crown; Thro’ faith we shall conquer, Tho’ often cast down.
He who is our Savior, Our strength will renew; Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.**

Seneca’s quote: “Oh that a hand would come down from heaven and deliver me from my besetting sin!” has already been fulfilled. God’s hand did come down to deliver us from evil. Then, when it went back to heaven, it left behind the church (“one another”) to help deliver me from my besetting sin. – Rick