**YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION (#5)**

***Just Say No!***

In 1971 President Richard Nixon implemented his *War On Drugs* policy. During the turbulent 60’s when the unpopular Vietnam War was raging, many high school and college age youths rebelled against authority. Rock groups went from innocent rock-n-roll tunes like the Beatles’ *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, to their anti-cultural drug songs like *Day Tripper* and *Strawberry Fields Forever*. Drug use skyrocketed. I will never forget the “sweet” smell of marijuana in my high school bathrooms that would nearly choke me. It became the in-thing to tune-in and trip-out among teens and twenty-somethings. Like Elijah, it seemed to me, “all have bowed the knee to Baal (drugs).”

By 1981, when Ronald and Nancy Reagan were in the White House, they escalated the *War On Drugs* program by starting the “*Just Say NO*!” campaign. The First Lady headed the push by making hundreds of speeches and appearing on many TV shows to promote the “Just Say NO!” idea to America’s youth. It was intended to give kids the courage to reject the drug pushers and to increase peer pressure to stay drug-free. Then, in 1983, the Los Angeles Police Department, under the leadership of Police chief Daryl Gates, began a program called D.A.R.E. (**D**rug **A**buse **R**esistance **E**ducation). In this program a D.A.R.E. police officer would be a part of the elementary, middle school, or high school scene, making himself or herself visible to all the kids so they could feel safe saying “NO!” to drugs. This program spread to over 75% of all schools in America.

Critics argue in retrospect that these programs did not work. They claim drug use is just as prevalent in America today as ever before. But I strongly disagree with these critics, for saying “NO!” to drugs, or any temptation, is a God-approved tactic that is found throughout the Bible. Knowing right from wrong must be learned from childhood. It is the parents’ task to teach their children that “NO!” is God’s own way of using the phrase “*Thou shalt* ***NOT***” to overcome sin (see 8 of the 10 commandments – Exo. 20:1-17). The first words we taught our children was “NO!” in order to keep them from sticking their fingers in the electrical socket, throwing a temper tantrum, or running in the street. “NO!” is a word that God uses often, encouraging all who are in authority to use it too.

The Bible is very clear who is behind every temptation we face. *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone”* (Jam. 1:13). James goes on to tell us these critically important words regarding temptation:

*14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.
15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
16* ***Do not be deceived****, my beloved brethren.”* (Jam. 1:14-16)

Deceived? Who is the deceiver that tempts us? Revelation 12:9 calls Satan “*the deceiver of the whole world*.”

Satan is not a red-suited, pitch-forked, beaty-eyed, hooved-feet, fanged-toothed monster that you easily recognize. He is the original Transformer, one who “*transforms himself into an angel of light*” (2 Cor. 11:14). Without knowing it you meet him every day. Just as Eve had no fear of the serpent in the garden but was oh-so-casually deceived by his “wisdom” and charm (Gen. 3:1-6; I Tim. 2:14), so we fall to his angelic appearance in the same way. If you could only see the devil as God sees him, you would be horrified and repulsed by him. You would know all his temptations are meant to damn your soul. Just as you would never cuddle up next to a crocodile, you would “*flee fornication*” (I Cor. 6:18), “*flee idolatry*” (I Cor. 10:14), “*flee the love of money*” (I Tim. 6:10-11), “*flee youthful lusts*” (2 Tim. 2:22), and “*flee from the wrath to come*” (Lk. 3:7).

When you tell a “little white lie,” such as Ananias and Sapphira did, Peter tells us, “*Why has Satan filled your heart to* ***lie*** *to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land*?” (Ac. 5:3). Satan is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). Just say “NO!” to all lying.

When there is trouble in a marriage, who is the one tempting the couple to find sexual satisfaction outside the vows of marriage? Satan! Hear Paul prove it: “*Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control*.” (I Cor. 7:5). Just say “NO!” to all temptations to commit fornication (i.e. all sex outside of marriage – Heb. 13:4).

Who is behind our cowardice to stand up for Jesus and not be ashamed? Satan! Jesus told Peter, just before his cowardly denials, *“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat”* (Lk. 22:31). Just say “NO!” to the temptation of shame toward God, Christ and the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

Who is behind every false doctrine promoted by religious teachers? Satan! *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (2 Cor. 4:3-4)*.* Just say “NO!” to anyone or anything that does not square with the oracles of God (I Pet. 4:11; Ac. 17:11; 2 Jn. 9).

Who lurks in the shadows or sits on the shoulders of a man considering obeying the gospel, whispering in his ear, “Don’t believe it, it’s a lie”? Satan! *“Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved”* (Lk. 8:11-12). Just say “NO!” to the temptation of procrastination to wait, like Felix, “*for a more convenient time*” (Ac. 24:25).

Oscar Wilde, the British poet and playwright, once famously joked, “I can resist anything except temptation.” Oscar Wilde was wrong! He should have read what Paul wrote instead of all his worldly associates: “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*” (I Cor. 10:13).

In other words, with God’s faithful promise to provide “*the* *way of escape*,” you always have options. The weapons at your disposal are many (Eph. 6:10-18). We can indeed, “*Resist the devil*” (Jam. 4:7), and “*Resist* (the devil) *steadfast in the faith*” (I Pet. 5:8-9).

Brethren, contrary to popular opinion, just because we’re humans, we don’t ***have*** to sin! With God’s help, we can always “just say NO!” - Rick