

Call to Obedience #223
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God told Eve not to blame the devil but rather to face her own sin.

Tried and Triumphant

By Reimar Schultze

“And immediately the spirit driveth him [Jesus] into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him” (Mk. 1:12,13).

God Has His Men Tested

We know this truth from Genesis on. We know how God tested Noah for many years before he could trust him with the ark of salvation. Abraham was tested 20 years before God allowed him to become the father of many nations. God tested Moses 40 years before he sent him to be a deliverer of the Hebrews. And the list goes on.

God would not send Jesus, his perfect son, into the ministry until he had been tested, until he had triumphed against all the wiles of the devil. And God never sends a man on a mission or into a pulpit unless he has been tested unto triumph!

God never puts a man into a position of leadership over a flock if that man still gets his feelings hurt or becomes resentful or bitter when disappointed. God will never send a couple into the ministry who have an unresolved marital conflict or who have children living in rebellion (1 Ti. 3:4,5).

The church will send defective, morally flawed, and unsanctified men and women into the ministry. The church will send men and women into the ministry who still have hidden gods in their closets or little addictions to things of the world--but God does not! Of course, God sending his men is no guarantee that they will never fail in the future. But when sent of God, his men are likely to make a quick recovery should they fall on their face.

Because most men are sent by men into the work of the Lord, without having been tested and tried unto triumph in God's school of discipleship, three out of four ministers quit the ministry before the age of retirement.

Jesus was tried and tested, and he triumphed under God's divine plan. It was when the tests were over that Jesus went forth under the power of the Holy Spirit!

Jesus Was Tempted in the Wilderness

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. There is a wilderness of temptation for all of us. We think that if we have finished a prescribed Bible course or training seminar, or if we have gotten our seminary degree, we are ready to be sent. We think that we have experienced our wilderness of temptation to equip us. But this is not necessarily so.

Our wilderness of temptation is of the Holy Spirit's choice. For Jesus, his wilderness was in the Judean desert. For some of you, it may be in your marriage. For others, it is in the work place; and for yet others, the wilderness tests are in sicknesses. Then, there are some for whom the wilderness of temptation is under a pastor who uncovers every corner of their carnal lives, which is, incidentally, part of the pastor's call, for carnality will not find entrance into heaven. Do not let your hurt feelings remove you from such a school of discipline unto a pastor who tickles your ears. Stay in God's appointed wilderness until you are as pure as refined silver, and the Holy Spirit will direct you from there.

Oh, my friend, there is so much defective, untested material out there. There are so many recalls because men have refused to stay their 40 days or their 40 years in the tests that would have made them triumph.

Jesus Was Tempted by the Devil

It is not pleasant, but it is an honor to be tempted by the devil. You have to be very spiritual to be tempted by the devil himself--especially for 40 consecutive days!

In our subconscious minds, many of us carry an exaggerated perception of the devil. We often act like Satan has the three major attributes of God: omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence.

The devil has none of them! He does not know all things; he has very limited power; and he can only be at one place at one time.

Because of this, very few saints (only the most important to the kingdom of God) ever have a personal encounter with the devil himself. Thus, in biblical history, there are only three cases where we have a dialog between Satan and God, or man. The first one was with Eve; the second one is found in the book of Job; and the third one was with the Son of God. That is it!

In fact, the word "devil" is not employed at all in the Old Testament, and the name "Satan" is only used in Job, Chronicles, Zechariah, and once in all of the 150 Psalms.

Paul, in his 13 epistles, also seldom refers to the devil, leaving him entirely out of Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Can you imagine the great apostle, Paul, the architect of Christian theology, the great spiritual warrior who prayed day and night for the saints, in his letters of spiritual instruction to several churches and friends, leaving out the devil altogether?!

Man's Greatest Temptation is from Within

Yes, Jesus was tempted by the devil, but we must observe that the Bible does not make the devil **our** first line of battle. Rather, the Bible declares as our primary enemy something within ourselves called the old Adam, the sinful nature, the carnal nature, original sin, the old man, or just plain lust.

Unfortunately, most of us are, by far, too unspiritual for the devil or even his demons to know that we exist! The devil and his demons will rarely waste their time on people who are spiritually in and out, up and down. In fact, we learn from Acts 19 that seven sons of a Jewish priest by the name of Sceva tried to cast out demons in the name of Jesus, and an evil spirit jokingly said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" (v. 15). Well, who are we? Do we live close enough to God to present a threat to our spiritual enemies?

Once again, our first line of battle is not devils but the lust of the flesh. James, the great clarifier of otherwise obscure theological statements, says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death" (Ja. 1:14,15). John calls our worst enemy the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:15,16); Paul calls him the old man (Ep. 4:22); and Jesus said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mk. 7:21-23).

Only the New Man will Put On the Armor of God!

Jesus did not make the devil the main barrier that stands between us and him; rather, it is the lustful, proud, world-loving Self-life. Hence, he said, "If any man will come after me, let him

deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Lu. 9:23). He says, “...let him deny himself.” It is the lustful, uncrucified life that makes us prayerless, praiseless, unsanctified, and unfit to walk with God. It is the lustful spirit, and not the devil, that draws a man into adultery. It is a proud spirit, and not the devil, that causes another man to number his troops. It is the love of the world, and not the devil, that makes thousands leave churches where holiness of heart is the standard.

For most of us, it is not the devil who chases us all day but the carnal nature: the undisciplined, old man with his affections and lusts. Therefore, Paul pleads with the **Christians** in Ephesians 4:22 and 24 to put off the old man and to put on the new man, “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” It is only after the old man is dead and the new man is put on that the battle with “...principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, (and) spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ep. 6:12) begins to be meaningfully engaged. The old man will never put on the armor of God to engage the powers of evil.

Oh, how we have glorified the devil; how we have blamed the devil when it is we who are to be blamed for living uncrucified lives. We have created a massive doctrine of the devil that takes the attention away from the real culprit within the human heart, that blames the devil for so many things of which he had nothing to do.

In summary, carnality will fight no spiritual battles. It will not be visited by the devil. Carnality will not put on the armor of God. Carnality will be blind to its own wickedness and make the devil its excuse for every evil thing.

Christian brother and sister, let us crucify the old man, this carnal nature. Then, let us, with the new man, put on the armor of God and be true and faithful to the tests and trials that follow, that we might come to triumph in the power of the Holy Spirit to be sent forth on God’s divine mission.

Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. He said, “...the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Jn. 14:30). Jesus’ battle was without. Ours is within, and it is only when we conquer in the “within” that we seriously begin to engage the vast armies of demons--alluded to in Ephesians 6--to gain new territory for our Lord.