

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **“Combating Satan”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, James Gravelle.

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:21-22). Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. Today we are continuing in our series of topical lessons by looking at ways to help us combat Satan. Jesus—the sinless One—is our perfect example. In all things that we do and say, we are to emulate Him. In Hebrews 4:15 we read, “We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus went through the very same things that we do. He was tempted, just as we are. Yet there was not a single time that He yielded to temptation. Jesus **never** committed sin! That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Consider, too, what James said in James 1:12-16.

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 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. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.”

We, as human beings, **are** going to be tempted to sin. If we give in to the temptation and commit sin, we die. In Romans 6:23 Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If we overcome temptation, we will receive a crown of life. If we want to be successful in overcoming sin, then we must look to the example of Jesus. In Hebrews 12:1-2 the writer said,

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [those people listed in Hebrews 11], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We must look at Christ’s life in order to see how He overcame sin. Thus, let us seriously consider the events recorded in Matthew 4:1-11 so that we may learn more about sin and about how to overcome the temptation to sin.

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you”’ and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You

if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

One of the things that these verses teach us is that Satan is alive and active. There are many in the world who do not believe in Satan (or at least act like they don't!). But the Bible says differently. In 1 Peter 5:8 Peter said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Truly, Peter was one who clearly understood this matter because several years earlier, on the night that the Lord was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane before being put to death, Jesus spoke with him about these very things. In Luke 22:31 we read, "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.'" I don't know about you, but if the Lord said to me, "Satan wants you so that he may sift you as wheat," it would scare me terribly. Jesus often spoke to His disciples quite candidly about matters such as these. In Matthew 26:31-32 we read, "Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.'" Remember that Peter was the impetuous one who always spoke up. If he had something to say, Peter would just blurt it out! In verse 33 Peter said to Christ, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." We need to be very careful when we make such promises. Note Jesus' words in verse 34: "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Yet in verse 35 we read, "Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And so said all the disciples." You know the rest of the story. That very night, as the disciples slept, Jesus prayed in the garden alone. He asked that the cup be taken from Him, yet not His will be done, but the Father's. In verse 43 we see Jesus joining the disciples again as Judas leads the Jews to Him. As they start to take Jesus, Peter does exactly what he said he would do when he said that he would fight and die for his Master. He pulls his sword and aims a death blow at the head of the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear in the process. But Jesus defuses the situation by telling Peter, "Put up your sword." Peter was true to his word, but worse was going to be coming that same night. In Matthew 26:58 we see Peter following His Master at a distance to the high priest's courtyard, where he entered with the servants to see what would happen. Here's the picture. Jesus is being arrested. He is being taken along by this angry mob—and Peter, out of curiosity and concern, follows afar off (that is, at a distance, where it's safe). He wants to see what is going to happen to his Master. In Matthew 26:69-75 we read,

"Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, 'You also were with Jesus of Galilee.' But he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are saying.' And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.' But again he denied with an oath, 'I do not know the Man!' And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.' Then he began to curse and swear, saying, 'I do not know the Man!' Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So he went out and wept bitterly."

Peter then knew what Jesus meant by the phrase, "sifted as wheat." Indeed, Satan had asked for him—and had done what he said he would do. This brings all the more meaning to the teaching in 1 Peter 5:8 for us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." In Ephesians 6:11 Paul tells us that we have equipment that we can use to enter into battle with Satan. He says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." If Satan was not a threat to us, this armor would not be necessary. Every

time someone is tempted to do evil or to commit sin, that temptation is a product of the devil. Satan tempts us when we are weak. In Matthew 4:2 we read of Christ, "And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry." Satan tempted Jesus when He was weak and hungry. From the language of Mark 1 and Luke 4, it seems that Jesus was being tempted throughout the entire forty-day time that He fasted in the wilderness. In Mark 1:13 we read, "And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan." In Luke 4:2 we read that Jesus was "tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry." Satan was constantly tempting Jesus at what Satan felt were Christ's weakest moments. In like manner, Satan will tempt us when and where we are weakest. There will be times when we **are** weak—when we are sad, when we lose a loved one, when there are no other faithful Christians around, or when difficulties of whatever nature arise. There are times in our lives when we are weak. Perhaps we do not study our Bibles nearly enough. Perhaps our attendance at worship services is not regular enough. Some vice or former vice in our life may come back to haunt us again and again so that we are tempted to fall back into those old sins. Satan is smart enough not to attack us when we are strong. Rather, he will go for our weak spots.

In these verses, we also learn that Satan will come to us. In Matthew 4:3 we read, "Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'" There is no need for us to go looking for temptation because Satan will make sure it comes to us. Satan is active—ever working to make sure that we always have temptation right before us. He is relentless in his efforts, and will always lay before us the temptation of sins of omission and sins of commission. There are things in our life that we are supposed to do, yet we omit them. There are things in our life that we are not supposed to do, yet we do them anyway. Such things—when they violate God's will—are sinful. The avenues through which Satan tempts us are numerous and varied. He tries to create doubt in our minds. In Matthew 4:3 he said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God..." Satan will try to get us to doubt our worthiness, our ability, our Savior, the church, our brethren, etc. In various different ways Satan will try to cause doubt. But as Christians we need to be confident. This confidence comes to us through knowledge. And knowledge is power. Satan appeals to our fleshly desires, as is evident from Matthew 4:3. "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Jesus was hungry. Satan's offer surely tempted Jesus! Satan appealed to Jesus' desire for food, and he will appeal to our fleshly desires as well. Have you ever heard the phrase, "If it feels good, do it"? This is why Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Paul's advice regarding this matter to those in Galatia can be found in Galatians 5:16 where he wrote, "I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Satan also will misuse Scripture, as Matthew 4:6 makes clear. "For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and 'in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Satan quotes only part of Psalm 91:11 when he says, "He shall give His angels charge over you." The rest of the verse reads, "to keep you in all your ways." Satan perverted the meaning of the verse. It did not mean what Satan was using it to mean. Satan tried to misuse Scripture to tempt Jesus to sin by giving in to him. Today, many of Satan's followers also use misuse Scripture in an effort to get us to go down the wrong path. Satan also misused Psalm 91:12—"In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone." This verse is a metaphor taken from a nurse's management of her child. In teaching the child to walk, she guides the child along plain ground. But when stones or other obstacles occur, she lifts up the child and carries the child over them so he can continue walking once more. Thus, she keeps the child in

all his way, watching over and guarding every step he takes. Paul seems to allude to this in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 when he writes, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” This is how a merciful God deals with the children of men, ever guarding and defending them by His power. Satan twists the Scriptures—just as his followers today so often do. In 2 Peter 3:16 we are given a warning about this as Peter talks about some deep things that Paul had said—things that Peter referred to as “hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” Some people will unknowing (or even knowingly!) take Scriptures out of their context in an effort to “prove” their false beliefs. Some, for example, try to use Ephesians 2:8-9 to prove their doctrine of “salvation by faith only.” In this passage Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” When a person removes a verse from its context, he may think that it proves his point. But if it contradicts other passages of Scripture, then, of course, it does not. Notice what James 2:24 says about faith. “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” Some try to use the Old Testament in an effort to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. But when we search through the New Testament, we see that God commands us to “sing.” There is no instruction to “play.” This is why we must be serious students of God’s Word. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Many today claim to speak the truth, when, in fact, they are not speaking the truth at all. We have been warned in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Satan also will tempt our pride, as Matthew 4:8-9 points out. Satan said to Jesus, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Satan was telling Jesus that if He would fall down and worship him, he would make Him King of the world. Satan was tempting Jesus to want to become an earthly King. But Jesus understood that He was to be a spiritual King. Today, Satan tempts us in similar ways. He says, “Come to terms with me. Let us compromise, and I will see to it that you will be a hero among men.” So many have given themselves over to Satan in an effort to be popular, to get ahead in life, and to be a “very important person” in the eyes of men. Too many think more about what the world thinks about them than what God thinks of them. It is sad indeed that so many will give their souls over to Satan in an effort to be exalted by men. In Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” In Luke 6:26 Jesus said, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

How was Jesus able to resist temptation? In each of these instances He did so by using the Word of God. Jesus said three times, “It is written...” (vss. 4, 7, and 10). Jesus knew the power of the Word of God. Paul also knew this. He wrote in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul said, “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” This verse speaks of the doctrine of the cross—that is, the doctrine that proclaims salvation to a lost world through the crucifixion of Christ. Notice the phrase, “is foolishness to those who are perishing.” There are only two classes of people when the Gospel is preached—the unbelievers and gainsayers who are perishing, and the obedient believers who are in a state of salvation. To those who are continuing in the first state (the lost), the preaching of salvation through a crucified Savior is folly. But to those who believe the doctrine of Christ crucified, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

The Gospel is divinely edifying, and will deliver people from the power, guilt, and pollution of sin. In Ephesians 6:13-17 Paul wrote,

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

To be able to resist the devil with the Word of God, we must **know** the Word of God. We must put on this armor and spend time with it so that we know it, know how it works, know how it protects us, and know how to use the offensive tool of “the sword of the Spirit” that was given to us. We are engaged in a spiritual war. But God has not left us unprotected. Just as a soldier of Christ must know how to use the equipment of God, we, too, must constantly practice and prepare for this battle. Earlier I said that knowledge is power. In 1 Timothy 4:13 Paul said, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine.” Paul wanted Timothy to continually study the Word of God. In John 6:44-45 we read, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” The result of using God’s Word against temptation can be seen in Matthew 4:11—“Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.” In James 4:7 we read, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” The devil cannot stand against the power of God’s Word. God’s Word is too powerful. And because of that power, God gives us this promise in 2 Peter 2:9—“The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” We are told in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Also, in John 15:5 Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” We are all going to be confronted by temptation at the hand of Satan. But we have the ultimate weapon against him—the Word of God. We, like Jesus, can say in every temptation, “It is written...,” **if** we know the Word of God. We do not have to be defeated. Instead, we can be victorious! In Romans 8:37 Paul wrote, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Thank you for joining us. Please return for our next program about the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “COMBATING SATAN”

1. What two things, according to 1 Peter 2:21, did Christ do for us?
2. What, according to 1 Peter 2:21, did Christ Himself **not** do?
3. According to Hebrews 4:15, what does Christ have in common with us?
4. What, according to James 1:13, will God never do to us?
5. What important story about the life of Christ is found in Matthew 4:1-11?
6. In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter compares Satan to an animal. What is that animal?
7. In Luke 22:31, what did Christ tell Peter and the other apostles that Satan wanted to do to them?
8. Satan **did** tempt Peter—and Peter **did** sin. According to Matthew 26:69-75, what sin did Peter commit?
9. In Ephesians 6:11, what did Paul tell Christians to do to defeat the devil?
10. When, in Matthew 4:3, Satan tempted Jesus, to what part of Christ's nature was Satan appealing?
11. What two pieces of excellent advice does Christ provide for us in Matthew 26:41 that can help us resist the devil?
12. When we see Jesus tempting Satan in Matthew 4:6, Satan was misusing something to carry out his temptation. What was that “something”?
13. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter said that some people will “twist” something to their own destruction. What was that “something”?
14. What command did Paul give in 2 Timothy 2:15 that can help us defeat the devil?
15. What warning is found in 1 John 4:1 for us today?
16. What important point is contained in James 1:12 regarding resisting temptation?
17. Ephesians 6:17 speaks about “the sword of the Spirit.” What is that sword?
18. How, according to Matthew 4:4,7,10, did Jesus resist the devil's temptation?
19. According to Paul's statement in Romans 1:16, what is the Gospel?
20. Of whom was Jesus speaking in Matthew 10:28 when He said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”