

Overcoming Satan

After he was baptized and before he began his public ministry, Jesus spent forty days praying and fasting (see Matthew 4.1-11). During that time he was tempted by Satan, yet Jesus overcame Satan's attacks and defeated him on every front. Jesus' victory is an example for us. A number of lessons are found in his battle with Satan.

When you commit yourself to do God's work, Satan will oppose you. This was true with Jesus. He was baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon him, and he accepted his messianic mission (see Matthew 3.13-17). Only then did Satan confront him. He relentlessly tempted and harassed Jesus in the wilderness, even offering him all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for his submission. Satan always opposes the man or woman who is committed to do God's will. That's what the name Satan means, "adversary" or "opponent." So if you are going to do God's work, be prepared for the devil's attack.

Satan will tempt you where you're weak. Jesus had been fasting for forty days, and so Satan tempted him to turn stones into bread (vv 2-3). This was a low blow. Jesus was worn out and famished from a lack of food, and Satan enticed him to miraculously turn stones into bread. He was really tempting Jesus to use his supernatural powers for his own personal gratification. Yet, Jesus resisted. We too will be tempted by Satan in areas where we're weak and vulnerable. He knows where to hit you, whether it's in the area of anger or lust or greed. Therefore, we need to be on guard at all times, especially in the areas where we're weak (see 1 Peter 5.8-9).

You can overcome temptation by resorting to God's word. Each time Jesus was tempted he turned to the Holy Word to guide and strengthen him (see vv 4, 7, 10). His response to each attack was "It is written." To overcome Satan we must know God's word and how to use it in spiritual battle. Satan will not typically announce his identity or his intent to destroy you; rather, he will disguise his destructive intentions. Thus, we must know God's word to give us discernment and strength in the time of temptation. If we rely on our feelings or on our own puny strength, we will fall. Only the power of God's word can deliver us.

After the time of temptation, God will comfort you. Jesus stood strong against the devil and so the devil left him in defeat. Then angels came and ministered to him (vs 11). In what way did they minister to him? I'm sure they

encouraged him and gave him strength. Yet, I also think it's possible that they miraculously provided him with the meal that he refused to provide for himself. Whatever they did, they comforted him after his intense battle with Satan. And God will do the same for you. Though it's hard to stand up to the devil and resist temptation, God will send you comfort and strength if you stand strong. And eventually he will even give you the crown of life (see James 1.12). So be strong, hang in there, and overcome Satan in Jesus' name.