

Don't Take the Bait

(Part 1)

by Bryan Gibson

The devil is powerful and relentless. We know that from Scripture—and from our own experience. But we're not helpless against him; there's plenty we can do to overcome the temptations he presents. Let's look first at our attitude toward temptation and sin, and then in another article, we'll discuss some specific actions we need to take. Let's keep the following facts in mind as we prepare to do battle.

Jesus died to save us, not just from the guilt of sin, but also from the practice of sin (Titus 2:11-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). According to these two passages, the proper response to the cross is to live for Him, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly. The death of Christ is a powerful motive to overcome temptation and sin.

Every temptation can be overcome, with God's help. "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" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Yes, the devil is powerful, but "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Sin is not nearly as satisfying and fulfilling as the devil would have us believe. It does bring a certain amount of pleasure, but this pleasure fades very quickly. Moses understood that (Hebrews 11:24-26), and it's time we learned the same lesson. Sin can only satisfy the flesh; it cannot satisfy our deepest needs. Jesus says so, and we should trust Him.

Sin is nothing to play around with, because it can make us its slave (2 Peter 2:18-22). An unknown author once said, "Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay." Don't believe it? Just ask the man who continues his affair, even though it's destroying him, his family, and his partner's family. He knows all too well the pain he is causing, but he just keeps going back. "His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin" (Proverbs 5:22).

"Each victory will help you some other to win" (*Yield Not to Temptation*). Strength is gained each time we resist temptation, each time we exercise our faith. A whole-hearted "NO" to sexual immorality (or any other sin) the first time will make it easier the next time. Resistance can become a habit, too, and that's the one we want to develop.

Overconfidence plays right into the devil's hands. If we think we can go to all the wrong places, hang out with all the wrong people, and escape unscathed, we're just fooling ourselves. Overconfidence leads to carelessness, and we cannot afford to be careless against a "roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8). "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).