

Introduction

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His Person

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His Works

—

His Indwelling

—

His Baptizing

—

His Sealing

—

His Filling

—

His Gifting

—

His Helping

5

The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, March 18, 2012

The Spirit's Help in Times of Temptation

Temptation to sin is a reality in the Christian life. Many have believed that they can mature to such a point in their lives that they no longer experience any temptations to sin. But while it's true that as we grow in Christ we surrender less to temptation than we used to, we will still face temptations until the day we are glorified in the Lord's presence. But we have a wonderful Advocate who helps us in these times of temptation. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "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

We continue our consideration of the specific "helps" that the Holy Spirit gives the individual believer this morning by taking up the subject of how the Spirit helps us in those times of temptation.

I. HE HELPS US BY THE FACT THAT HE INDWELLS US.

- A. Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth who were very prone to patterning themselves after the immoral practices of surrounding pagan culture. One area in which they frequently fell into temptation was in their sexuality. Paul urged them, "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). And even though these believers were often tempted to give-in to the pressures around them, Paul reminded them of Who it was that indwelt them. He wrote, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (vv. 19-20). A reverent realization that they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit--and were nothing less than the dwelling place of God Himself--would help them to "flee sexual immorality".
- B. In the original language, Paul spoke of the individual believer's body--not just the spirit, but the body--as the "temple" of the Holy Spirit, who was from God and who was already in them. The word that Paul used--*naos*--referred not just to the temple area in general, but specifically to the inner portion of the temple that included the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In other words, the believer is a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit from God in the deepest sense. How inappropriate that sin should be found in the dwelling place of God! In a similar vein, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:16, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'" It's not that we would lose our salvation if we sinned, or that the Holy Spirit would cease to make us His dwelling place. His indwelling is an act of grace; and He did not even cease to indwell the disobedient Corinthians. But a grateful and humble realization that we are, right now, the Holy Place and Holy of Holies that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant era--and our love to Him for so graciously and intimately dwelling in us--should make us want to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit by dragging any unholiness into His holy habitation! "For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 4:8).

II. HE HELPS US BY THE WAYS HE EMPOWERS US.

- A. As we noted in our last study, the weakness of our flesh is such that we cannot please God by the power of the flesh. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:8, “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” But as Paul goes on to remind us, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (vv. 7-10). This is not speaking only of the resurrection of our physical bodies after death, but of the inability to please God in the power of the flesh; since Paul speaks in the present tense--“the body is dead because of sin . . . the Spirit is life because of righteousness”. It’s meant to show that the Holy Spirit is our present Help in enabling us to live a life that pleases God. “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (v. 11). Because of the Spirit’s presence in us, He is a living resource in us that gives us the power to live godly lives.
- B. There is literally, therefore, no temptation that God will ever allow to enter into our experience that is greater than the enabling and indwelling Holy Spirit is able to help us resist--if we will but trust Him. We should, of course, never deliberately expose ourselves to temptation in order to test Him; because that would be foolish and presumptuous. (That’s what the whole surrounding context of the verse we began with--1 Corinthians 10:13--is all about!) But when it comes to the temptations that our loving Father allows to come into our lives to test us, He has placed in us a power that is greater than any power on earth. The Holy Spirit is the “exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23). It’s because of Him that Paul could say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13); and could say to us, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20); and that the apostle John could say with respect to the ‘spirit of antichrist’ that is already at work in the world, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).