

To God Alone Be The Glory

Of all the blessings heaven will bring, the one I often look forward to most is that I will stop sinning. I grow weary of bringing shame to my Savior and then dealing with the problems my sins cause. How about you? Are you tired of the burden that guilt brings? Think how much more we could accomplish for the Lord if our life weren't constantly being pulled apart by the temptations we give in to. Think how often it happens that we end up hurting the ones we love even more than we hurt ourselves by our own sins.

So what's the solution? Maybe we should hold a rally, whoop ourselves up into a frenzy, come up to the altar one at a time, and promise in front of the whole church, "I will not give in to Satan anymore." Terrific intention! The Lord wants us to fight all of Satan's temptations with tenacity. But experience has taught me that I don't have the strength to keep such a promise for long. How about you?

Friends, let's recognize that Jesus has already beat Satan for us, as we heard in today's Gospel. Although Mark's account of Jesus' temptation is short, we know from Matthew's & Luke's accounts that Jesus pulled apart each of Satan's temptations with a truth from the Bible. "*It is written,*" Jesus kept saying. This is why you memorized Bible passages for Catechism class. The truth of God's Word is the key to overcoming all of the lies by which Satan tempts us.

But even if you memorized the whole Bible from cover to cover, you would still fall into temptation. This is why it is so important that Jesus did not fall. God now counts Jesus' success against Satan's temptations as if it were our success, our victory. And God counts Jesus' death as full payment for our failings. So when God looks at us through Jesus, he sees us as having never sinned, as having done only what is right in his sight! "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*" (2 Cor 5:21).

Now that we are forgiven because of Jesus, are there any other people in the Bible (besides Jesus) who overcame temptations? Yes, of course. Let's spend a few minutes this morning becoming acquainted with one incident from the life of David so we may learn this lesson: **TO BEAT SATAN, FOLLOW DAVID'S LEAD.**

Who was this David? Just a boy from the country, an Israelite. His nation had long since conquered the land of Canaan. For several centuries they were led by people we call "the judges." But Israel wanted a king. So the Lord chose a man named Saul to be their first. Saul started out well, but he was never fully devoted to the Lord. And after a while he turned his heart away from the Lord and leaned on his own understanding (see Proverbs 3:5). So the Lord told Saul he was going to replace Saul with someone better.

He didn't give Saul a name, but he was talking about David, whom the Lord refers to as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). That's high praise from the Lord, and true. Of all the things David loved in life, he loved the Lord most. (FOLLOW DAVID'S LEAD.) But David was still young, and he needed training before taking on the role of king. So after David defeated Goliath (1 Sam 17), King Saul, who didn't yet know that David would be his replacement, took young David into his service. God blessed everything David did for Saul. He was a good leader, and soon the people started to respect David even more than they did Saul (1 Sam 18). Saul was then filled with jealousy and kept trying to kill David because it was becoming clearer and clearer that David was the one whom God chose to succeed Saul.

Now put yourself in David's shoes. You have done nothing wrong. In fact you have been loyal, devoted, and faithful to your king. And for this he wants to repay you with death! What would you do? Would you try to beat him to the punch? Would you smear your enemy with lies? Would you call the news media and hold a press conference to control the narrative?

After several attempts at reconciliation, David ran for his life. Saul and the army gave chase. Saul almost captured David several times. Then one day, when Saul had to relieve himself, he went into a cave for some privacy—the very same cave

David and at least some of his men were hiding in. David's men urged him to kill Saul while he was vulnerable. As David was creeping forward to cut the heart of his enemy, he decided instead to cut off a corner of Saul's robe. As he crept back to his men, David's conscience started bothering him for cutting his king's robe. Here was a tender conscience, the likes of which suited a leader after God's own heart. Praise God, dear friends, if he has blessed you with a tender conscience like David's, one that truly cares what God thinks of each action, word, and thought that originates between your ears! Praise God, dear friends, if he has blessed you with a heart that wants to please God with each deed, word, and attitude.

Apparently David's men were neither pleased nor impressed with his flimsy trophy—a garment hem. But godly David took the pains to instruct his followers in the holy ways of the Lord. He said, ⁶“*The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.*” ⁷With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul.” What a terrific example David is for us! What respect he has for authority! If he had been an American, he might have reasoned, “Because my opponent has abused his authority, I have the moral right to take his authority away.” But our God teaches, “*Submit yourself to the governing authorities*” (Romans 13). David knew that Saul was still king; therefore he owed

Saul his allegiance. If David had been an American, he might have reasoned, “What little I did to Saul is nothing compared to what Saul has done to me. If he doesn’t leave me alone, he’ll find out just how nasty I can be!” But our God says, “*It is mine to avenge, I will repay*” (Deuteronomy 32:35). And God says, “*If your enemy is hungry feed him. If he is thirsty give him something to drink*” (Proverbs 25:21-22). Nowhere does God say: “Post your grievances on social media.” Go talk it out face to face. God’s purposes are not served when we attack our enemy rather than skillfully persuading them to think differently. David teaches us to leave all that “getting even stuff” in God’s hands. If you want **TO BEAT SATAN, FOLLOW DAVID’S LEAD**. Know who you are (a devout follower of Jesus), and know what your purpose is (honoring God and benefitting your neighbor). Respect those the Lord has placed over you, whether they seem worthy of respect or not. Don’t give in to those who say it’s ok to speak unloving words. May your conscience always bother you when you snap back in anger or when your words wound. May you feel you have disgraced God when you retaliate. May you insist that your life and your mind be governed by God’s righteous principles. All this, dear friends, is part of living in the forgiveness Christ purchased for us on the cross.

Back to our story. When Saul had finished his business, he left the cave. David followed him out and called to his

King. When Saul turned, David bowed, prostrating himself with his face to the ground, a position of great vulnerability, showing by his actions that he considered himself below his king, subservient to him. Here are David’s godly words to the one whom God had put over him: “*Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? ¹⁰This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’ ¹¹See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. ¹²May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.*”

TO BEAT SATAN, FOLLOW DAVID’S LEAD. It is not our business to right the wrongs we have endured. But we don’t have to remain in a cave and let people walk all over us either. When we speak up, the temptation is to talk trash to those who wronged us. But all we need to do is set the record straight, respectfully.

Notice how clear David’s conscience is? He appeals to the Lord to judge between himself and Saul. Believers do this only if they are confident that the Lord would

approve of their path. So again, FOLLOW DAVID'S LEAD, keep your words and actions pure—*keep your head in all situations* (2 Timothy 4:5)—no matter how hurt you feel. For example, if your spouse gives you little affection or affirmation, you have no right to seek love in the arms of another. If your life is boring, you have no right to seek excitement in anything God labels evil. Nothing anyone else does or says gives you a legitimate excuse to hurt your body, or to force others to do things your way, or to ruin someone else's reputation.

Frankly, I'm surprised at how Saul responded to David's appeal. It would have been strategic for Saul to trap David and his men in the cave until they starved or surrendered. But through loving words, and respectful tone, and showing honor, David won over his enemy. Saul said, ¹⁷*"You are more righteous than I. You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. ¹⁸...the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. ¹⁹...May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. ²⁰I know that ... the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands."* How encouraging for David to hear this from the man who did not want David to replace him!

Unfortunately Saul's change of heart didn't last. Soon his hatred for David dominated his thinking again. You can see this same pattern in the life of anyone who has given in to a sin repeatedly, whether harsh words, or the kind of

anxiety that is really a lack of trust for the Lord, or taking things that belong to others, or you name it. Anyone who persists in a sin can harden themselves to that sin, and eventually to all sins, so much so that they can have only fleeting emotions about turning away from evil and doing what is good. We see this in Saul. What a great reason to FOLLOW DAVID'S LEAD and not Saul's! You and your Savior both want your repentance to result in real, long-lasting change. The Lord so wants you to walk in his ways that he is willing to deliver you from sinful patterns, to change you from the inside. See how glorious it is to be loved by God for Jesus' sake?

Soon Saul went back to pursuing David. Soon David had another chance to kill Saul, but again he refused to sin against the Lord or against his leader. FOLLOW DAVID'S LEAD, no matter how many times a sin comes around and says, "Do me. Come on. Do me." Follow David's lead because this BEATS SATAN. Follow David's lead because, through Jesus' work, you were already forgiven of all your sins. Follow David's lead because this will reflect well on the reputation of our Savior and of our church and of all the other Christians in the world. Soon the Lord may have others following your lead. And where will this lead? To our Savior. May he have all the glory.