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**The Devil Didn't
Make Me
Do It!**

1315-A

Series: The Mind of Christ



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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I had just returned from a trip downstairs to the area in our building where the snack machines are huddled together in a corner just waiting to attack any unwary calorie-cutter who might be walking down the hall. In my hand was a peanut-laden candy bar, which contained enough sugar to send a non-diabetic into insulin shock. As I munched gleefully on this incredible no-no, I was thinking to myself, "If only I had an illustration to begin this lesson on yielding to temptation."

I was not going to choke on the candy bar, mind you. I was washing it down with a can of grape soda that was about the best tasting stuff I ever drank. It said "New" on the can, so I guess it hadn't been recycled, and nowhere did it mention the word "diet" or "low-calorie", so I guess I can figure why it tasted so good.

Now I want you to understand, it wasn't my fault. I went down there just to look around. At best, perhaps, a "diet coke" might take 50 of my hard-earned pennies, but only if I deemed it proper. When I got into that little alcove, however, I lost control. This machine was bigger than I was. It was all lit up, and it was singing, "I need your money, you need my candy, help!" Had I said no, it might have attacked me. I had no change, so that should have helped, but there was a slot that said "bill changer" and unlike most bill changers, it worked!

That in itself must have meant it was a divinely planned encounter, right? WRONG. I just flat sinned. I looked at the candy, thought about it (for about five seconds), and before you can say, "Russell, control yourself", my billfold was out of my pocket and that machine swallowed my dollar like a disposal unit. Trembling with excitement, the money went down the hatch, the candy came out, and I had been "drawn away by my own lust and enticed" (to quote the book of James).

If, perhaps, you can relate, you also need this study. It is about the subject of obedience, and it is about the issue of immediate response to temptation. Now I want you to know that I enjoyed that candy bar. I wanted it. The devil didn't make me do it. I chose to. And I have made such a habit of choosing to, except for a change in my understanding of temptation, I will do it again.

Food isn't our only area of temptation, either. I use that as an

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illustration because it's a little more comfortable to deal with. We spend money we didn't plan to spend, then we wonder what came over us. We look at things we ought never to see, then we wonder what made us do it. We think thoughts that break the heart of God, then we look around to be sure no one knows what we're thinking, not even caring that God does. We lose our tempers and our tongues get out of control, and we can't believe we said that. We don't really set out to do those things; but somehow we feel that had circumstances been different, we might have made the right choices.

Oh, we don't say it. But we often, like Eve in the garden, really in our heart of hearts say to ourselves and thus to God, "The devil made me do it." That was Eve's argument. "Lord, it was that snake. He beat me into submission. I never would have done a thing like that." Adam, of course, faced God like a man (a wimp, that is). He said, "Lord, that woman You gave me, she made me do it." Poor Adam. Eve got him down, put a hammerlock on him, and forced him to eat the fruit salad God had put in the "no-no" section at the cafeteria.

And man has been "passing the buck" ever since. In fact, in today's society, the worst of sins are passed off as the result of our heritage, our temperament, or our "dysfunctional" backgrounds. Adam couldn't use that one. No one came from a better family than he did. Oh, he didn't have a mother. Maybe that would explain it. And he married too young, right? Peer pressure, that was his argument to God. Eve was his only peer, and he didn't want to offend her.

The Bible simply says that Eve sinned. It adds that Adam sinned. They knew what was right, but they listened to the voice of "the stranger", and began to try to reason away the known will of God. It wasn't hard to do. To them, God was being too strict. Oh, granted, He had allowed them free run of the garden except for that one tree. But still, that didn't seem fair. And didn't that tree look better than all the rest? Sure it did. So Eve looked again. And she listened again to the world's first traveling salesman, Mr. Lucifer, and his argument sounded good.

But the devil didn't make her do it. Eve made a bad choice. She went up to Satan's vending machine and peered longingly through the glass. Wow! Look at that shiny apple. It's row 4, item C. She put in her dollar, pushed the "4" button, then the "C" button, and sure enough, it was as though it were meant to be. All the devil did

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was give her a choice. She made the decision. The rest is history.

And history confirms that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked. We are naturally drawn to do that which is evil, until and unless we choose to let the God who lives in us make our choices for us. When we don't, we are choosing to let lust conceive and bring forth sin. And at that point, the devil isn't doing anything but laughing at our stupidity. What causes the problem? Is there a cure? Those are the questions we will be pursuing as we continue our look at the issue of immediate obedience.

In our last lesson, we began to look at immediate obedience and eternity, and determined that today is the day of salvation. Each time an unbeliever says, "Not today, Lord, maybe tomorrow," that individual is taking a known opportunity to be healed of the disease of sin and be guaranteed an eternal home in glory, and is bartering it away, gambling on "another chance." He or she, like Felix, in Acts 24, is waiting for a "more convenient time." If that is you, I would remind you that you are expressing the ultimate in presumption. The God of eternity paid the entire price for your sins and is personally inviting you to accept His free gift of salvation.

For you to say, "later," is the greatest affront to God imaginable. It says, "Hold the door open, Lord, if something better doesn't come along, I'll consider giving you my life. Don't call me, I'll call you." Each time you say "no" to God's incredible offer of life, you gamble that there will be another time, and your sensitivity to the sin that created your need for salvation diminishes. Given enough "tomorrows", you eventually reach a stage where your ears are waxed closed, and you no longer hear the still, small voice of God's Spirit beckoning to you.

We looked in our last study at a second area of life where immediate obedience is essential: the arena of our response to God's specific calling for our lives. We looked at Luke 9 and the three excuses, (good excuses mind you) that were given to Jesus for postponing following Him. None of these men wanted out. They all wanted to be...disciples. But none of them understood the urgency of responding immediately.

When we concluded our last study, we were beginning to look at the issue of immediate obedience and the obvious, the normal, responses to God's Word that we tend to postpone, thinking we'll get to them soon. But sadly, our lives go on and on and we become less sensitive to His Spirit rather than more so. That young person

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plans to deal with that wrong relationship soon. But he or she waits, and as they wait, Satan moves in and they pay the price for unequal yoking. They meant to break it off. Tomorrow. Now their lives are hopelessly entwined in a situation that will have seemingly uncontrollable consequences.

The issue of unconfessed sin is another. We plan to deal with it...tomorrow. But the longer we wait, the less likely we are to do so, and the more deadly the disease of sin becomes as it wraps its tentacles around us and makes us feel comfortable with its deadly grip. Most of us who have lived a long time would just like the opportunity to go back and deal with the insidious disease of procrastination that has kept us from becoming what we could have become in Christ.

The next area that requires immediate obedience is the area of God's leading. Sometimes we don't have a clear Scriptural absolute to make a decision by, and we pray, search for principles, seek counsel, and finally come to the conclusion that God's will for us is to take that job or make that move or buy that house or make that call. But even though we know it's right, human logic says it doesn't make sense. That's often a good confirmation that you are in God's will, but the natural mind can't handle that. So it acknowledges that everything says "yes", but since it isn't normal, put it off.

Sometimes timing is critical where God's leading is concerned. All through Scripture, you have God's men and women in exactly the right place at the right time because they obeyed immediately. You have the Noahs, the Abrahams, the Elijahs. Ah, but then you have the Jonah's who struggled and ran and postponed doing God's will because it didn't make sense.

He ended up in a fishy situation because of it. And so do we. Learn to wait on God for His leading, but once you know what He wants you to do, don't listen to the voice of the enemy. He will give you a thousand reasons to postpone doing what God wants you to do because it just doesn't make sense to the natural mind. He is a liar. He is the father of lies. Obey immediately.

But the most crucial area of all where immediate obedience is the difference between victory and defeat is an area called "temptation." It is here that we will focus our attention for the remainder of this study.

The illustration at the beginning of this lesson was designed to

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illustrate the problem. It is not, however, indicative of the seriousness of the issue. Sin, according to Scripture, is nothing more than a wrong choice in response to exposure to that which is evil. You may be more prone to certain sins because of your background, your past wrong choices, or your physical and emotional makeup, but you do have a way of escape. And the more naturally difficult it is for you, the more supernatural grace is available for you to overcome. I Corinthians 10 makes it plain:

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.

(I Corinthians 10:13 NKJV)

Think about that passage carefully. There are at least five basic truths there that are absolutely in concrete.

1- This passage has no exceptions. It says, “No temptation”. Whenever you find a “no” or an “all” or an “every” in Scripture, stop and worship. It means God has closed the door on Satan and this is an absolute. I know what modern psychology says. I know what modern education says. I know what modern philosophers say. But listen to what God says. He says, “To the Christian, every temptation to violate the Word of God has a way out.” Granted, the more times you choose to violate His Word, the more difficult the way out becomes, because you venture into the jungle of choice and get lost in a maze of disobedience, programming the will to respond to the desires or emotions rather than the Word. But the way of escape is there. And at the beginning, the way of escape *is the easy way*. The longer you disobey, the more difficult it becomes.

2- You are not a lone ranger. Everybody is born in sin, and everybody has the same pulls to temptation you do. You may envy Mary Smith because she only weighs eighty pounds soaked in concrete, and because she can sit down at a table laden with goodies and sip a glass of water. You, on the other hand, have a magnet inside you that draws you to cafeteria lines, buffets, candy machines and fast food restaurants. But Mary still has to make the same decisions you do. And she has some areas that are tough for her that are not as hard for you. All sin is common to man because all mankind is born in sin. Mark it. Mark as well the fact that many of the infractions that modern man has labeled “dysfunctional” or “alternate lifestyles” are nothing more than sins against God that society has made more convenient and acceptable and thus have

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become more common. Be careful in judging those who have fallen. Your sin may not be as visible to man, but it is to God. But neither condone any infraction against scripture as unavoidable. That makes this passage a lie.

3- The key to victory is the faithfulness of God, not the faithfulness of man. That may be the hardest lesson of all to learn. God is faithful. Your ability to withstand temptation does not hinge on your ability to do anything but choose to trust God. You are not faithful. You know that. God knows that. Satan knows that. But God is. He never fails to do what He promised. And He has promised you that no temptation will ever overtake you that He will not be there to overcome for you. Never. You may have given up in a certain area of your life because you have tried and tried and always failed to resist. Your conclusion is: "I can never be faithful." Good. That's a start. Now, memorize this phrase: "But God is faithful..." And every time that temptation rears its ugly head and Satan whispers, "Give up, you can't resist this one", answer him, "You're right, I can't, but God is faithful." I Thessalonians 5:24 is a good, short commentary on this issue. It says:

He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it

(I Thessalonians 5:24 NKJV)

4- What is God promising to be faithful to do? He is promising not to let any temptation come into your life that you in Christ cannot overcome. Now, I know, from experience you have a hard time believing that. That's what faith is. It is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is believing God because He is God; and the less likely anything is to happen apart from Him, the more faith is required of you to free Him to do it. But the more faith you need, the more grace God gives you to believe, provided you are willing to ask for it. You must "come boldly to the throne of grace and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16). You must say, "Lord, I don't have the faith to believe that You in me can overcome this horrible habit or this terrible appetite. I know what Your Word says, but experientially I have failed so often, I can't believe it will ever be any different. Please, dear God, enable me to believe." He will and as you believe, God in you will take over.

5- How will He do it? He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear it. (I Corinthians 10:13). That word "escape" (*ekbasis*) literally means "a way up and out of." This is the only place it is used in the Bible. The Amplified Bible describes it: "the

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means of escape to a landing place.” It pictures someone sinking into a mire of quicksand from which there would be no rescue. Suddenly, along comes a strong right arm reaching out to that person, just as they are beginning to sink. That arm, if they will only be willing to trust it and grab hold, will lift them up and out and set them on something firm and solid, safe and sound. That is a picture of the way of escape. It isn't so much a route to take. It is more the source of deliverance. “A means of escape” might be a better definition.

Practically speaking, based on Matthew, chapter four, the way of escape appears to be the Word of God laid up in the heart. That passage, along with Genesis, chapters two and three, and Job, chapter one, give us our best insights into the hand-to-hand combat that goes on between Satan and man and Satan and God. The solution to temptation seems to be two-fold:

1) Do not listen to or argue with the enemy. Answer simply “It is written.” To do that, you simply must have the Word of God laid up on the tablets of your heart. Jesus didn't give Satan a commentary or a theological discourse on the merits of self-discipline. He didn't give him the time of day. He stabbed him with

the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

(Ephesians 6:17b NKJV)

2) Don't linger or procrastinate. The minute you see the tempter coming, respond immediately. Every second you wait you give up precious soil on the battlefield of the heart. Any student of warfare knows that you don't wave to the enemy as he approaches, hoping he changes his mind by the time he gets within gunfire range. You don't try to engage him in conversation hoping he's really a nice guy who simply doesn't understand you.

He is cunning, ruthless, and vicious, and has only one purpose in life. Just as Jesus has come to seek and to save, Satan has come to deceive and destroy. “Like a roaring lion, he stalks about, seeking whom he may devour.” (I Peter 5:8). If a literal, roaring lion appeared in your back yard tomorrow morning, I doubt if you'd try to engage him in conversation. I don't think you'd try to pet him and domesticate him so you could live peaceably with him. You would do whatever was necessary to get on safe territory. You would look for a way of escape.

The difference is: this roaring lion is disguised as “an angel of light” (II Corinthians 11:14). He has on his camouflage so he'll

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blend into the landscape. But that doesn't change his nature. His singular purpose in life is to destroy you. Don't listen. Don't linger. Don't loiter. The very moment you see that you are being tempted, begin to quote the Word of God. It is your way of escape, and if you are willing to take it, God is faithful, and He will see that you are lifted above the enemy's gunfire into the "keep" of the castle.

The key is the immediacy of your response, your understanding that Satan's only tool is to tempt you, and only you can yield to the temptation. No matter how intense the attack, the devil can't make you do it. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (I John 4:4). Never at any time is Satan stronger than God is. Never. So long as we realize that "the battle is not ours, but God's" (II Chronicles 20:15), and we "put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand" (Ephesians 6:11), we will not lose the skirmishes of life.

The problem is:

1- We don't see life's conflicts as spiritual battles between Satan and God for control of our lives, so we fail to put on the armor and we fail to cry out to God for victory, and

2- We don't realize the difference between being tempted and letting temptation turn into sin.

James, chapter one, is a must passage to memorize so we can be constantly reminded of the pattern of temptation and the way of escape. It is familiar, but that familiarity may present a problem. We may *know* it, but not *understand* it. It says this:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone;

but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.

(James 1:13-16 paraphrase)

These truths reach out to us from this passage:

1- God never tempts you. Remember, God allows Satan to tempt you in order to test you, but the temptation to do evil never originates with God. It is a physical impossibility for God to tempt you. He cannot be tempted, nor can He tempt anyone. Not ever? No, never. Don't get angry with God when the tempter comes calling.

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To accrue the temptation to God is blasphemy. Remember the rule: "No one should say God is tempting me, for God cannot be tempted nor does He tempt anyone." You are dealing with absolutes. These are not negotiable principles. No one can be an exception. God cannot tempt you. End of subject.

2- Every temptation comes the same way. It is our own evil desire, responding to the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." According to I John 2:15-17, all that is in the world falls into these three categories, and none of these comes from the Father. Satan, through the world system, dangles evil in front of us constantly. But he has no power to make us yield.

3- Temptation only becomes sin when it is yielded to. "After desire has been conceived, it gives birth to sin." It is not a sin to be tempted. It is a sin to willfully, presumptuously put yourself in the midst of a situation where you know you'll be tempted, then dare God to rescue you. "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matthew 4:7). God can't be tempted, but it angers Him when we try. But if we are not willfully walking into the enemy's camp, and temptation comes our way, that temptation itself is not sin. When, then, does it become sin?

When it has been conceived. When the seed of the enemy is allowed into the womb of the heart and conception takes place, then a sin is born. And it doesn't take long. A second glance. A lingering look. A choice to think about that thing just once. A decision just to entertain the enemy's reasoning, just in case. Instantly, sin is conceived. That is why the immediacy of obedience is critical. We must:

- a) recognize sin for what it is
- b) turn to God instantly
- c) use God's Word faithfully

Then we can be assured, based on the promise of a faithful God, that there is a means of escape. Jesus is the way of escape. His Word is His vehicle, but He is the Way.

If your problem is an inability to control spending, and you willfully pick up that catalog that so entices you or go into that store that so weakens you, you are asking Satan to tempt you. Sin is certain to be conceived. You are doing the enemy's work for him.

If your problem is over-eating, and you even walk into the alcove where the candy machine is, you are entering enemy territory. You

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are saying to Satan, "Come on, big guy, let's see how tough you are." We know how tough he is. We ought to run for our lives.

If your problem is the lust of the eye or adultery of the eye, the minute you pick up that magazine or turn on that television program that sets in motion the process of temptation, you are walking into a minefield unprotected.

That's issue number one: Don't cooperate with Satan by teasing him. You'll lose every time. But the second issue is even more critical. When you are not cruising in his territory and temptation slips up on you, the faster you claim God's Word, the less likely you are for sin to be conceived.

Sin, then, is a choice. And given any time at all, you've made the choice. Sin is a second-hand matter. It only takes a second for the desire to conceive; and once sin has been born in our hearts, it makes a crease in the linings of our lives and establishes "strongholds" where tiny bits of residue remain and act like magnets attracting the same sin again. Satan knows that. So he keeps coming at you, aiming for the area of that stronghold. Each time sin is conceived, it becomes a greater stronghold, until finally it becomes so natural, we don't even call it sin any more. Now it has become a besetting sin.

How could we have prevented it? By laying up the Word in our hearts and responding immediately, "It is written!" Immediately isn't fairly soon. Immediately is the very second the desire surfaces. Before you take a second look. Before you reach for that second helping. Before you stop to think about how angry you are. Before you have a chance to covet what is not yours. The instant the thought or the sight touches the nerve end of your spirit, answer, "It is written."

That's why memorizing Scripture in the areas of your weakness is so important. When you can answer temptation with God's Word on the subject at hand, Satan has no weapons left. He will depart, and the angels will come and minister unto you, as they did to Jesus in Matthew, chapter four.

Spiritual warfare is what this life is all about. We are engaged in a battle on our way to the victory celebration. The final victory is assured. The interim skirmishes are a given along the way. And the closer we get to God's dear heart, the hotter the flame the enemy will use. We must flee the very presence of evil, and we must, when confronted with temptation, respond instantly with the Word of God.

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We also must stop putting the blame where it doesn't belong. Don't blame God, and don't blame Satan. God can't tempt you, and Satan can't defeat you. Only you can *choose* to let desire conceive and bring forth sin. The choice is ours. Minute by minute the choice is ours. Day after day the choice is ours. Year after year the choice is ours. And when you fall, be honest. Don't say, "The devil made me do it." If you are God's child, he can't *make* you do anything.

THE BATTLE WILL BE VICIOUS

Yes, the battle will be vicious,
The fire will be intense,
He'll lurk behind the scenes
And he'll keep you in suspense.

And just when least expecting it,
You'll see temptation's call,
A fleeting glance, a lustful thought,
And you're about to fall.

But wait a minute, child of God,
Christ Jesus lives within,
The devil can appeal to you
But He can't make you sin.

He has no power over you
That you do not allow,
The choice is yours: you can say, "No."
And you can do it now.

The very second he appears,
Release the Word of God.
He cannot stand that awesome power;
He'll flee the Master's sod.

The very second he appears,
Release the Spirit's sword.
Don't linger, look, or listen,
Just say, "Thus saith the LORD."

Stand firm, let God defeat the foe;
You can just be still.
For the devil's never made you sin,
And child, he never will.

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