

**LESSON 6****WATER BAPTISM**

As a Christian, you have become an active follower of Jesus Christ. It is very important that you take steps to demonstrate your decision to identify yourself with him. Jesus said *“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 10:32-33)

One of the first steps a new Christian undertakes is to be water baptised. This is the most powerful way in the New Testament that new believers identified themselves with Christ. Baptism is an act of obedience through which believers express their faith and commitment. Jesus gave this command to his disciples shortly before he ascended into heaven: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”* (Matthew 28:19)

**What does the word ‘baptism’ mean?**

Baptism comes from a Greek word – *baptizo* – which means “to immerse or dip”. When we look at the passages in the Bible concerning water baptism we find the context shows baptism was performed by fully immersing a person in water:

**Bible Baptism Requires**

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|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Much water                 | (John 3:23)                 |
| 2. Going to the water         | (Mark 1:9, Acts 8:36)       |
| 3. Going down into the water  | (Acts 8:38)                 |
| 4. Coming up out of the water | (Mark 1:10, Acts 8:39)      |
| 5. A burial                   | (Romans 6:4)                |
| 6. A resurrection             | (Romans 6:4-5)              |
| 7. Bodies washed              | (Acts 22:16; Hebrews 10:22) |

Baptism in the Bible was never practised by sprinkling a baby with water – which the Catholic and Anglican churches perform. They have distorted baptism to make it an initiation into their churches, and absolutely necessary for salvation. This is not what the Bible teaches. Believer baptism, the way the Bible explains it, has nothing to do with denominational church affiliation and salvation is by faith alone, not by works.

The act of water baptism alone does not make you a Christian. You can go under the water a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner! Salvation is by faith alone. You cannot buy it or earn it. You accept what Jesus has already done, and receive salvation as a free gift. Then you follow and obey him, doing what he commands; which includes being baptised (cf. Matthew 28:19).

### **The Spiritual Significance of Water Baptism**

The significance of water baptism was well known in Jesus' day. There was a practice in Jewish custom known as a '*proselyte's baptism*' – a proselyte is a person who leaves and recants their old religion converting to a new religion.

### **A Proselyte's Baptism**

A non-Jewish person (called a 'Gentile'), who wanted to become a Jew, went through a solemn ritual. They stood in a river, lake or sea, with water up to their neck while the Book of the Law (which was part of the Old Testament) was read aloud. Then they were plunged under the water, signifying that they were dying to their previous way of life and religion. When they came up out of the water they were rising to a new life, taking on the practices of Judaism, and so becoming a 'Jew'.

### **Christian Baptism**

Christian baptism is similar in its design and results, but with far greater significance. In baptism, the immersion of the believer symbolises their death to sin and their resurrection to the new life they now have in Christ. The believer outwardly affirms the inward commitment they have made to Jesus Christ as the Lord of their life. It is the public declaration of having entered into a binding covenant relationship with God.

A passage of scripture in the Book of Romans explains the significance and importance of water baptism for the believer in Jesus Christ:

*“...all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death... We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”*

Romans 6:3-8

### ***A uniting with Christ***

When you are baptised, you are identifying that you are united with Christ’s own death and resurrection. Your old sinful nature is crucified with Christ and is made powerless. And you rise, united with Christ, to a new life. You are no longer a slave to sin but are now free to live a holy and righteous life. Therefore, you die to your

previous way of life – separated from and independent of God – and enter a brand new life of spiritual freedom, authority and victory – as you walk with God, submitting to him and relying upon him in all things.

### ***A free person***

You are now free from the dominion of sin and death. You are no longer in rebellion to God and a slave to sin. You are now in relationship with God and have the nature, and therefore the power to choose, not to sin. The Holy Spirit who dwells within you because you are united with Christ, gives you the power to live free from sin as you obey him. You *were* a prisoner of sin but now you *are* a free person – you are liberated to live life as a righteous and holy child of God:

*“...count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master ...You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness...Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*

Romans 6:11-14, 18, 8:1-2



### **The Basis, Purpose and Nature of Temptation**

Satan is the tempter.[2] All temptation comes from him. Temptation is not sin. Believers must be able to distinguish between the two, otherwise they can fall into Satan's trap.

For example, a man might innocently happen upon the image of a scantily clad woman and immediately be effected by that image. That is the way God has wired men up – it is automatic and natural to be attracted to an image of beauty. That initial response is *not* sin. The temptation, however, is to take it further. It becomes sin when he fixes his eyes upon that image, meditates upon it, and begins to fantasize. It has now become what Jesus referred to as adultery of the heart.[3]

The truth is, what we constantly think about we will eventually act out. That is why we have to arrest temptation which appears as a thought in our minds. The mind is the control centre of our being, and what we allow our mind to be fixed upon will control our lives. We must learn to put temptation down right at the very beginning. All temptation finds its basis in legitimate needs. These needs include our bodily appetites – mostly for drink, food and sex – and our emotional desires to be loved and to feel significant and secure.

God created us with these needs. It was his design and purpose. This is a fundamental fact of our humanity. God never intended us to fulfill these needs independently of him and the way he intended them to be satisfied. Sin is, in effect, our efforts to meet these needs in ways contrary to God's order and design.

When Adam and Eve sinned they became disconnected from God and therefore were unable to fulfill their needs in the right and

proper way. Instead of looking to God they were forced to find fulfilment in themselves and the world in which they lived. However, these things could never satisfy them fully and looking to those things instead of God would become a destructive force. Sexual bondages, workaholism, gluttony, alcoholism, drug dependency, intellectualism, worship of false gods etc. etc., are all the consequences of people's disconnectedness from God.

The purpose of temptation, therefore, is to get you to disbelieve God so that you will live independently of him. When we take our eyes off God and look instead to ourselves and the world we automatically lose our capacity to walk in righteousness. Righteousness is that intrinsic quality that enables us to be connected to God and live the life God desires for us.

Temptation works through three areas. These are listed in I John 2:16 (NKJ):

***“For all that is in the world – **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life** – is not of the Father but is of the world.”***

The lust of the flesh refers to appetites, cravings and bodily passions. The lust of the eyes has to do with the selfish acquisition of people and things; for a person's own self-indulgence. The pride of life relates to self-promotion and self-exaltation. These three elements are evident in both the temptation of Eve in the Garden, and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.[4]

### **The battle for your mind**

Many scriptures show us that the centre of spiritual conflict is the mind:

*“Those who live according to the sinful nature have **their minds** set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have **their minds** set on what the Spirit desires. **The mind** of sinful man is death, but **the mind** controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”*

Romans 8: 5-7

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of **your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is— his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Romans 12:2

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in **the attitude of your minds**; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Ephesians 4:22-24

*“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive **every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.”*

2Corinthians 10:3-5



*“.....Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will **know** the truth, and the truth will set you free.””*

John 8:31-32

*“The god of this age has blinded **the minds** of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

2 Corinthians 4:4

*“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, **your minds** may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”*

2 Corinthians 11:3

Before you became a Christian, strongholds of sinful thought patterns and habits had already been established. You learned these when you lived your life independently from God. Your non-Christian environment taught you to think about and respond to life in a particular way, and those thought patterns and responses were ingrained into your mind. Your mind contains your beliefs and attitudes which direct your choices and therefore the outcome of your life.

When you became a Christian, however, your mind was not automatically renewed. Your old sinful thought patterns and habits were not erased. Therefore, your beliefs and attitudes must be adjusted so that you can make the right choices, and change your life to that which God desires for you. That is why the scriptures tell us *“to be transformed”* and *“to put off your old self ... and to put on the new self”*. [5] You have a responsibility to be transformed. You have the responsibility to become the new self. It

does not happen immediately and involuntarily when a person is first saved. It is something that must be worked at. So how is this transformation process accomplished? What areas of our mind and understanding must be altered?

Firstly, you must change your foundational belief structure. You must see things as God has revealed them. You must recognize and accept what God says is true. You must accept what God says about himself and the world; that he is good and that we live in a world dominated by evil.

And you must believe what God says is true about you. You are no longer a sinner. You are not now the product of your past. You are now a saint, a new creation in Christ Jesus. You have been fundamentally changed through what Jesus accomplished upon the cross. You are God's child, born of the Spirit, recreated in his image that you would reflect his person and walk in righteousness. If you continue to see yourself as a sinner, however, you will never be transformed. It is just not possible. You will remain a captive to sin because sin will remain an automatic response. If you will see yourself truly as the Bible describes "*the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus*",[6] then you will be enabled to live the kind of life that is pleasing to him and to you.

Secondly, you must take a stand against Satan and his purposes for you, which he seeks to accomplish through infiltrating your thoughts with his thoughts. Satan has access to your mind. Your mind is the principal spiritual battleground. Temptation, which comes from Satan, appears first as a thought in your mind. You take that thought, accept it and act upon it. You must become aware of his activity in this regard. Not all your thoughts are your own. Satan

is cunning. Often-time, he will speak into your mind in the first person, so that you will accept the thoughts as your own.

This is a war that you simply must engage in. You must do what the scripture tells you to do: *“take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”*.<sup>[7]</sup> The fight for the supremacy of your own mind is the most important battle of your life. The thoughts Satan introduces are lies to counter God’s truth. If he can get you to believe a lie then he can control your behaviour, and cause you to be impoverished and ineffective in your Christian walk.

If you don’t conquer Satan’s temptation right at the threshold of your mind, you will begin to mull his thought over, consider it right, justified or the only alternative, and choose to act upon it. Repeated acts form a habit, and that sinful habit over time turns into a full-blown stronghold. Once a stronghold is established, it becomes an automatic response; you have lost the ability to control your behaviour in that area.

The way to defeat these strongholds is not to attempt to stop the behaviour but to change your thinking. You can’t stop that sinful activity just by trying to stop, or telling yourself to stop. This is not what the Bible tells us to do. You don’t attack the fruit, you attack the root. If the root remains, the fruit will reappear. You must change your pattern of thinking by accepting and applying the truth. If you see yourself as a hopeless addict you will never be free of your addiction. But if you see yourself as a victorious child of God, for whom God and all his resources are available, how can you fail?

Proverbs 4:23 says *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”* We have to learn to guard our heart and protect

it from Satan's attacks in order for our lives to be conformed to the pattern God desires for us.

To better understand how patterns of independent thinking and behaviour were established and how to overcome them, it is important to know the make-up of a person before and after they become a Christian.

The Bible tells us that a person is made up of three elements – *spirit, soul* (mind, will and emotions) and *body*.<sup>[8]</sup> The mind is the control centre of a person's being. Our minds receive information from our senses in the natural realm, and from God and Satan in the spiritual realm. What we accept and believe to be true determines our actions and responses. Desires to feel, or to know, are also directed by a person's world-view i.e. what they regard to be true. A person satisfies their physical, emotional and intellectual needs according to their core values which are based upon how they view God, themselves and the world in which they live.

### **In Adam**

Before I accepted Christ I was of this world. I was a sinner. I was "*in Adam*" and my spirit was dead because I was disconnected from God.<sup>[9]</sup> Consequently, in my mind I felt:

- *Rejected*: therefore, I had a need to belong.
- *Guilt and shame*: therefore, I had a need of self-worth.
- *Weak and helpless*: therefore, I had a need for authority and control.

In order to satisfy these needs, I looked to things in the world – *power, possessions and passion* – and I used my body as an instrument in their pursuit.

Because I was alienated from God, I lived independently of God and I was therefore a slave to sin in both my mind and my body. I lived only for self-gratification and/or self-promotion.

The internal pain I felt, however, could never be resolved by worldly pursuits. Instead they produced in me dissatisfaction, unhappiness, conflict, frustration, stress, anger, bitterness, malice and insecurity. Patterns of wrongful thinking and behaviour were established in me, which kept me bound in a bitter cycle.

### **In Christ**

Now that I have become a Christian my state of being has been completely changed:

- I am no longer of this world because I have been born of the Spirit.
- I am no longer a sinner because I am a child of God made in his likeness.
- I am no longer in Adam because I am now in Christ.
- My spirit is alive because I have become connected to God.

Now I have

- *Acceptance* – My sin no longer stands as a barrier between God and me.
- *Worth* – I am a child of God, made in his image.
- *Security and strength* – Nothing can separate me from the love of God. The Spirit of power, love and wisdom resides within my very being.

However, and this is the point, my established patterns of thinking are not automatically changed when I first receive Christ, therefore, my mind must be renewed.

My mind is like a computer. It is the control centre of my being directing my actions and reactions. I have already allowed past experiences to program my mind. Much of this programming has taken place during my early childhood. My pattern of thinking has gone on for so long and is so ingrained it appears to be the core of who I really am. But this is not true.

When I become a Christian I bring the baggage of past patterns of thinking and behaviour with me. Now I must deliberately and conscientiously change them. I now have an obligation to walk not according to the old patterns (the flesh, the sinful or Adamic nature) but to walk after the Spirit. Romans 8:5 explains the key to achieving this result:

*“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”*

The fact is that a Christian can still walk according to their old nature. They can maintain their past pattern of thinking. Such a person is a ‘carnal’ Christian. They are born of the Spirit but are not living by the Spirit. On the other hand, a ‘spiritual’ Christian has renewed their mind and is led by the Spirit.

Only the mind controlled by the Spirit reflects the *“fruit of the Spirit”*: *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”*.<sup>[10]</sup> A carnal Christian will not exhibit these spiritual qualities.

It is possible for a Christian to have changed some areas of their thinking but remain bound to Satan’s domination in others. The solution remains the same. They need to bring every thought in

subjection to Christ. This is first achieved through genuine repentance and forgiveness, and then layer by layer accepting the truth as God reveals it to you through his Word and his Spirit, and actively submitting to God and resisting the devil.

### **Breaking free of the past – genuine repentance and forgiveness**

In the early church, when a person accepted Christ they were also taught and helped to break free from Satan's dominion over their lives. In the records of the early church we learn that new believers made this confession when they were baptised: *"I renounce Satan and all his works and ways."* They understood that they had lived in the kingdom of darkness and that they had been under Satan's control. It was therefore necessary for them to deliberately break free from his control as they entered the kingdom of God. This was achieved by renouncing him and his influence upon them.

Satan and his devices have not changed. Although belief in Satan is ridiculed in our society, he is as active as he ever was. People now think it is a joke to believe that Satan exists. That he is only a creation of Hollywood; that he is not real at all, just a movie character of fantasy. It is most important that you recognize that he is real; and as the Bible explains who he really is and what he does. You must now understand how he had power over you and that you now deliberately choose to break free from his control and influence. The first steps are to genuinely repent, and genuinely forgive everyone you have a grievance against.

### ***Repentance***

To repent literally means to turn your back and go in the opposite direction. You must deliberately renounce every sinful practice that you have engaged in over the course of your life, when you lived without Christ. You must come to Christ and you must leave Satan.

You must enter the kingdom of God and you must leave the kingdom of darkness. You must put Jesus on the throne of your life, and take Satan off that throne. You must announce Jesus the Lord of your life and denounce Satan who was your lord.

Many people come to Christ but because they never renounce their past lives, they continue to be oppressed by Satan. They gave him access to their lives through sinful practices. They opened doors to their lives to him because of past choices and those doors must now be shut.

Galatians 5:19-21 list the things we did in our sinful past that we must repent from and renounce:

*“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

For example, if you were an alcoholic and enjoyed the taste and feeling from drinking, you must oppose those thoughts by confessing that you now hate alcohol, because

- (1) that was part of your old sinful life and you no longer want to remain that way
- (2) it puts a barrier between you and God, and
- (3) the consequences for your family relationships are disastrous.

You must accept the truth that you are now a son/daughter of God, and that you are not an alcoholic; that you are not a helpless victim, but rather a victorious saint. When you purposely place God



and your loved ones above your desire to drink, your life is transformed. God grants you the power and grace to overcome as you choose him, his Word and his will, over your own flesh. Exercise faith in the scripture which declares:

*“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

John 8:36

*“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Romans 6:22-23

### **Forgiveness**

We all experience hurt at the hands of others, and sometimes even ourselves. The hurt may or may not be deliberate, but the effect is the same. It produces anger, an emotional sense of being wronged and that the person who offended us should pay for their offence. Unresolved hurt is evident by a state of emotional woundedness. It produces a weakness in our being that will cause us to fail in our relationships, both with God and others. One or more of the following will be evident:

- ungratefulness – we are never fully satisfied or content
- bitterness – we are harsh and angry
- unteachable – we are unyielding and stiff-necked
- critical and judgemental – we look down upon others
- manipulation – we try to control others
- withdrawal and isolation – we distance ourselves from others
- possessiveness – we hold onto things and people inappropriately

Jesus taught much about forgiveness. He likened it to releasing a person from a debt.[11] Unforgiveness, therefore, means an unwillingness to release a person from the 'debt' they incurred when they offended us. We want them to somehow pay us back for the hurt they have caused us.

Unforgiveness produces deep-seated feelings of anger, bitterness and revenge in the offended person. It is an emotional wounding which does not heal. These feelings may be hidden and suppressed, however, they can surface when we are vulnerable or the wound is touched i.e. when we are reminded of the offence by something which triggers the memory of the offence.

You may feel that you can't forgive because the pain you felt (and still feel) is so strong. However, forgiveness is a decision of your will. It is not an emotion. Contrary to what many are led to believe, you don't wait till you feel you can forgive someone for hurting you. You will never feel like forgiving them because you carry extreme pain that was caused by them! You simply choose as an act of your own volition to forgive.

This is not to deny that the event(s) happened nor is it an attempt to push it out of your mind. But when you forgive, the power of that sin over you will be defeated. In the parable Jesus told of the unmerciful servant, the consequence of his choosing not to forgive meant he was placed in the hands of jailers to be tortured:

*"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."*

*Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.*

*The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.*

*His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.*

*When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

Matthew 18:21-35

Satan has access to people's lives through their unforgiveness. Only when you forgive will you be released from his driving influences upon your life and the healing power of God allowed to flow into your being. If you choose not to forgive, however, Satan will continue to have power over you to torment you.

When you forgive someone this does *not* mean that you must now *trust* them. They may still be as evil as ever. Forgiveness and trust are two very different things. Trust is only given to people who are proven faithful and true, not to those who are abusive and sinful.

Forgiveness may not always reconcile us to the offender as they also individually have the right to choose between good and evil. We cannot make another person accept us or love us.

Just as our sins must be confessed and renounced, every person we hold unforgiveness against must be named and their offences against us released, in order to render Satan's power over us broken and extinguished. (Note: (1) You don't have to go to the offending person – if they are not also a Christian – and say "I forgive you for...". The offender could even be now dead, and it is impossible to even meet with them. This is something you do to free yourself from the offence by declaring before God that you forgive. (2) Reconciliation is not imperative. We only walk with those that we are in agreement with. A sinful person who has hurt us, and remains sinful, is not someone that we must now associate with once we have forgiven them. (3) Nevertheless, if the offender is – or has become – a fellow Christian, we must go to them and seek reconciliation.)

### **Living free in the present – victory over temptation**

The scriptural remedy to gain victory over sin and temptation is a simple one – embrace the truth of God and reject the lie of Satan. The key verse is James 4:7 ***“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”***

We have a duty to actively resist the devil. This means that we cannot be passive or dismissive. We must continually guard our minds by judging our thoughts according to the Word of God. We cannot entertain any thoughts that stand opposed to the truth expressed by God. We must act like custodians of a city who watch over it to keep it and protect it from hostile forces that surround it. That city is our mind. We are the custodians and the kingdom of darkness is the surrounding hostile enemy. We must be constantly on alert to Satan’s attack and learn to thwart him at every point.

Satan is aware of your background. He knows what circumstances you have been through, your family upbringing, the times of your life when you were emotionally wounded. He preys upon the weaknesses that are evident from your past. He pushes your buttons in order to get you to take your eyes off God and operate out of your old natural self.

Many types of sinful practices arise as coping mechanisms to ease the pain of emotional hurt, or to gain acceptance from our parents or our peers. He will prod you in those areas in an attempt to get you to trust in your old defences.

In other words, he will endeavour to get you to again take up your past sinful practices or your offences, by continuing to believe the things that bound you (your *old* self) in sin which are now *lies* about

your (*new*) self. For example, he will introduce seed thoughts into your mind such as:

- “I really need this ...”
- “I can’t live without ...”
- “He hurt me so much, I haven’t forgiven him and I can’t forgive him for ...”
- “I deserve this ...”
- “This would be so much fun ...”
- “Just a little, just this once more and then I will really stop ...”
- “I’m just made this way, I’ll never change ...”

These thoughts do not originate with you, though they appear to be your own! They are Satan’s invention.

Moreover, his attacks will often come when you are vulnerable and weak. He does not fight according to Queensbury rules. He will kick you when you are down. When current circumstances are adverse, when you are emotionally tender, when you are under pressure and tired that is when his attacks will be the most ferocious. (Some people are vulnerable when they experience blessing. When they are on an emotional high because of spiritual, financial or relational success they can be affected by pride.)

It is at this point that you must rise up and stand against him. He cannot sustain his attacks indefinitely because the promise is that when you resist him he will flee from you.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is a model for us. It lasted only a short time. Satan targeted the three areas of vulnerability but found no opening. Jesus resisted him every time by quoting from the Word of God. They did not engage in a *power* struggle, nor an *intellectual* debate, but rather a *truth* encounter. Jesus overcame Satan by the truth, not by argument or force. Satan had to leave when he was denied access. He would try again later returning at another opportune time:

*“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”*

*Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*

*Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”*

*Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

*Then the devil left him...until an opportune time."*

Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:13

We are to follow Jesus' example. When an attack comes we are to stand firm upon the truth. In this way we are submitting to God. We are accepting the truth as expressed by him. As we do this we are simultaneously rejecting the lie of Satan. And as we resist him he must leave us. I John 2:14 demonstrates the connection between submitting and holding to God's Word, and victory over Satan:

*"I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."*

The New Living Translation translates this verse:

*"I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won your battle with Satan."*

In order to experience victory over Satan, therefore, we must believe and speak the truth. Revelation 12:11 says *"They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony ..."* Our fight against Satan will be won or lost according to our confession. Just as Jesus responded to each of Satan's temptations with *"It is written ..."*, when thoughts of fear, lust, doubt, jealousy etc come, we should respond *"It is written ..."*:



- No weapon formed against me will prosper, and I will refute every tongue that accuses me. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is my vindication from God (Isaiah 54:17).
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1John 5:18).
- I am more than a conqueror through him who loved me (Romans 8:37).
- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2Timothy 1:7).
- Neither demons nor any powers can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:36-39).
- I have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13).
- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power and dominion (Ephesians 1:20-21; 2:6).
- I am always led in triumphant procession in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14).
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).
- I am in Christ and I believe, therefore, the incomparably great power of God is available to me (Ephesians 1:13, 19).
- I have been given authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm me (Luke 5:18).
- I have been given authority to cast out demons (Luke 9:1, Mark 16:17).
- The weapons I possess are not the weapons of this world. They have divine power to demolish strongholds (2Corinthians 10:4).
- I overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony (Revelation 12:11).
- I have renounced secret and shameful ways (2Corinthians 4:2).
- I have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Colossians 2:10).
- I resist the devil and he must flee from me (James 4:7).

On a practical note, consider this: if I can live free from sin for one minute, then it must be possible that I can live free of sin for two minutes; if two minutes then five minutes; if five minutes, ten minutes; if ten minutes, one hour; if one hour, then half a day; if half a day, then one whole day; if one day, then two; if two days, a week etc. etc.

I can't change my past, and the future lies beyond my immediate grasp, I only have the present. All that is necessary is for me to walk in obedience to God this very minute, and stay that course, one minute to the next. Jesus said that we were to take up our cross *daily*.<sup>[12]</sup> It is a daily choice to live with him, for him, and denying sin, selfishness and pride.

Finally, we are never to fear temptation that is beyond our ability to recognize it, nor are we to fear being inadequate to deal with it. Satan is not inventive. He uses the same schemes over and over again: 2 Corinthians 2:11 says *"... For we are not unaware of his schemes."* And 1Corinthians 10:13 declares *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*

### **Conclusion**

Water baptism will be a very important moment for you as you publicly declare your faith in Christ. This reference point will always remind you that:

1. You have entered into a (blood) covenant relationship with God.
2. You began your Christian life with a clear conscience before God. The Bible says *"...this water symbolizes*

*baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.”[13]*

3. You are called now to live a life of righteousness, in which you follow after Jesus, submitting yourself to his will, and actively oppose Satan, resisting his temptations.
4. You were separated from your past and began a brand new life. Baptism represents the end of a (bad) past, and the beginning of a new (and good) future. Before you were a Christian you lived in the ‘kingdom of darkness’ where Satan ruled. Now that you have become a Christian you have entered the ‘kingdom of heaven’ where Christ rules. Law and life in these two kingdoms are as different as darkness is from light:

You have been transferred from:		And transferred to:
<i>The Kingdom of Darkness</i>	→	<i>The Kingdom of Heaven</i>
From the Rule of Satan	→	To the Rule of God
From Separation from God	→	To Relationship with God
From Sin and Disobedience	→	To Righteousness and Obedience
From Sickness	→	To Health
From Anxiety	→	To Hope
From Torment	→	To Peace
From Fear	→	To Faith
From Hate	→	To Love

*“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. **For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**”*

Colossians 1:9-14

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### Lesson 6 Footnotes

- [1] See 1Corinthians 7:14
- [2] Matthew 4:3
- [3] Matthew 5:28
- [4] Genesis 3: 6, Matthew 4: 1-10
- [5] Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24
- [6] 2Corinthians 5:21
- [7] 2Corinthians 10:6
- [8] 1Thessalonians 5: 23
- [9] 1Corinthians 15:22
- [10] Galatians 5:22
- [11] Matthew 6:12-15, Matthew 18:23-35
- [12] Luke 9:23
- [13] 1Peter 3:21