

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

72

Dearest Grandchild,

Today's letter will pose an important question for you to consider. Jesus was tempted in every way like we are. He never sinned, and we invariably do. Why?

Please consider these two Scriptures:

This first Scripture refers to Jesus: **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin” (Heb 4:15)**

This second Scripture refers to us: **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23)**

What is the difference between Jesus and us?

While there are many aspects involved in the answer, let us begin by noting that sin does not start outside of us and work its way in. Sin starts inside of us and works its way out. **“each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (James 1:14)**. Jesus said it like this: **“For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'” (Mark 7:21-23)**

Adam and Eve did not sin by accident. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Neither had the courage to blame themselves. But their sin did not happen by accident. Both Adam and Eve “decided” to eat the forbidden fruit. Judas Iscariot did not betray Jesus by accident. He “decided” to do it. Neither do we sin by accident. We act the way we “decide” to act! Solomon said: **“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:” (Prov 23:7 KJV)**

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THIS? THE WAY YOU THINK DETERMINES WHAT YOU DECIDE, AND WHAT YOU DECIDE DETERMINES THE WAY YOU ACT. IN ORDER TO CORRECT THE WAY YOU ACT, YOU NEED TO CORRECT THE WAY YOU THINK! AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN A POUND OF CURE!

Note the difference in the way that Jesus faced temptations, and the way His disciples did. Before being tempted, Jesus prepared Himself mentally to face the temptation. While Jesus was praying, however, His disciples were sleeping. While Jesus was sweating great drops of blood, His disciples were snoozing away oblivious to danger. For several hours Jesus asked repeatedly for them to “watch” with Him. They didn't! So God sent an angel to strengthen Him (Lk. 22:43). Once Jesus had firmly made up His mind, He calmly told His disciples to sleep on and take their rest.

Note the difference! Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him three times, but Peter didn't

take that warning very seriously and went to sleep. When the soldiers came he was surprised. Because he did not make up his mind in advance, he denied Christ three times just as Jesus predicted that he would. The difference is obvious. Jesus was mentally prepared and Peter was not.

At the risk of being blasphemous, it seems that Gethsemane provided more of a problem for Jesus than did Calvary. In the garden He asked for help from His disciples. On the cross He didn't. In the garden an angel helped Him. On the cross he didn't. In the garden Jesus sweat was like great drops of blood. On the cross it wasn't. Since Jesus knew that the way He thought would determine the way He acted, He "decided" to prepare for the cross before the nails were driven into His hands.

Please consider doing what Jesus did. Please consider making up your mind about temptations in advance so you will not be blind sided and defeated by the devil.

Some of you are old enough to date. The time to decide "how far" you will go on the date is before the date begins. If you wait until the movie is over and you have been holding hands for half an hour, the devil has the advantage. Do what Jesus did! Make up your mind before you are tempted.

We live in an age where hardly anyone steps up to the plate and takes responsibility. When Dan White murdered Mayor Moscone in San Francisco, he claimed temporary insanity because he had been eating too much junk food. This absurd excuse is now known as the "twinkie defense". When D.C. Mayor Marion Barry was caught doing crack cocaine, Sally Jesse Raphael excused his crime by pointing out that he was an addict, not only to alcohol and drugs, but also to women and sex. When Richard Berendzen, former president of American University, was caught making obscene phone calls, the Washington Post said he deserved sympathy because he was the victim of an obsessive-compulsive disorder caused by abnormal DNA sequences.

The Bible, by contrast, states: "**So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God**" (Rom. 14:12). An integral part of salvation is doing what the Prodigal Son did. He confessed to his Father: "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Lk. 15:21). Once he did this, he was forgiven. When we confess our sins, we too can be forgiven.

The "Good News" is that God not only forgives us of our past sins, but also of the sins that continue to plague us every day. In fact, when we do sin, the Scriptures promise: "**we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world**" (1 Jn. 2:1,2).

The late Ardell Moore was a long time friend of our family. When His first wife, Sue, passed away, he married Edie Bowers. Here is a poem composed by Edie (Bowers) Moore when she was only 12 years old.

THE HEART IS A GARDEN

The heart is a garden when thought flowers grow.
The thoughts that you think are the thoughts that you sow.
Every kind loving thought bears a kind loving deed.
While the thought that is selfish is just like a weed.
We must watch what we think of each minute of the day,
And pull out the weed thoughts and throw them away.
And plant loving seed thoughts so thick in a row,
That there won't be room for the weed thoughts to grow.

With the help of Christ, I am confident that your "weed thoughts" will be pulled up by the roots and placed in the garbage where they belong.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce