

**Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.** <sup>15</sup> **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.** <sup>16</sup> **Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.** (NIV84)

Theme: The Lord is Undefeated.

1. He never lost to the devil
2. His victory is now ours

It's hard to go undefeated. In the entire history of the NFL only the 72 Dolphins finished with an undefeated season. There are only a handful of boxing champions who have finished their careers without ever facing a defeat—Floyd Mayweather Jr. is one of them, if you think he is done with his career. Rocky Marciano is another—both went 49-0. No president has ever won all 50 states. No country has ever won every war they've been a part of—we've even lost a couple.

That's the thing, we all lose. Each and every day we lose many battles against the devil. We fall into temptation. Before we were brought to faith we lost every battle—and really never put up a fight. And now that we have been made believers we are able and often do say 'no' to the temptation to sin. And yet there are many times that we fail to stand against temptation. There is a constant battle going on inside of us to either do what is right or to follow our sinful nature. Paul talks about this in Romans 7, **I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.**

The devil is an enemy who is more powerful than we are, smarter, and more clever. We don't stand a chance against him. This is what makes our enemy hard to defeat—he uses different temptations all the time; and he tempts us each in a different way. What are some temptations that seize you more than others? For some of us it's the lure of money and possessions, for others it's the misuse of sex. Many have a problem with drinking too much and others are addicted to drugs.

There are those who love to spread gossip and others who are constantly upset and angry at other people. Others simply want to be happy or do what feels good to them even if it goes against God's Word. Others are tempted to sleep instead of wake up and go to worship. Some are tempted to deny Christ or certain portions of his Word to avoid attacks from their friends and family or to go along with what society says is right. All of these are really symptoms of the selfishness, pride, and arrogance that dwells in our hearts and leads us to show love to ourselves more than to God and to our neighbors. We are like Achan in our first lesson for today; the temptation to sin grasps us—we may even try to hide our sins from others and from God as if he doesn't notice our sinful actions. But we know that he knows and so we are moved to cower in fear of him because of the consequences of our sin. If we fail to beat the devil it's not just another mark in the loss column; it's worse than a simple defeat. It is eternal damnation. There have been many who have lost a game but have gone on to win a championship, or who have lost a state but won the presidency, or have lost a battle but won the war. But when it comes to sin—if we simply sin once than we lost. As James says, **whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.**

So came Jesus. Today's gospel is about his temptation in the wilderness. After he was baptized the Holy Spirit led him out into the desert where he ate nothing for 40 days. Luke records three different situations that the devil presented to Jesus in order to tempt him into sin.

Jesus was in the desert and he was hungry—40 days without food. And if he just used a little bit of his divine power he could turn rocks into bread and he could eat—but that would be using his divine power to do what the devil told him to do and he would be using it for himself for selfish reasons. He could throw himself down from the high point of the temple and the angels would catch him—but that would be testing God and forcing him to do something. If he bowed down to the devil he could have everything under his power; and he wouldn't even have to suffer and die for it—but that would require worshiping Satan and thus giving him a victory. Jesus overcame these three temptations.

But it wasn't just those three temptations that Jesus faced. Luke tells

us that during the entire 40 days he was being tempted by the devil. And it wasn't just that. For the first 30 years of his life before his baptism the devil was tempting Jesus—as well as during the three years or so of his ministry. The Writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus, **has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.**

Tempted in every way, yet was without sin. Not once did Jesus fall to the devil's temptations. Not once did he fail to obey God's commands. Not once did he put his wants and desires ahead of God's or anyone else's. The devil desperately tried to get Jesus to sin. Because if he did then Jesus wouldn't be able to serve as our Savior. So the devil threw everything he had at Jesus; but he could not defeat him. Jesus defeated the devil again and again.

Jesus faced very real temptations. He was human and was tempted to sin just like we are day in and day out. But he isn't just human. He is also God—true man and true God at the same time. And God cannot sin. Paul tells Timothy in his second letter to him, **if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.** God cannot go against himself, he cannot sin. And since Jesus is God he cannot sin—it is not possible for him to do so, it isn't even a question whether or not he was going to sin. There is the paradox for today. As a human, Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are, and they were real temptations. But at the same time, since he is also God, there was never even a remote chance that Jesus would sin and thus go against his very Word.

So the devil never really had a chance at getting Jesus to sin and thus defeating him. It doesn't surprise us that Jesus withstood his temptation. He doesn't surprise us that Christ defeated the devil because he always defeated the devil. He won because he always wins. He is undefeated!

But he knows what it is like to be tempted. He was tempted in every way just as we are. He knows what it is like. He faced the same temptations; he had the same feelings as we do. The Lord is not some aloof God; he is not some supreme being who has no idea what it is like to be us and live in this sin-filled world. He lived on this earth for over thirty years. He knows what it is like to be us and he faced the same temptations that we face.

And he sympathizes for us. He knows what it is like to be one of us.

He understands the temptations we face. And so his heart goes out to us. He has first-hand experience what we face. But the great thing about it is that he doesn't just sympathize with us—his sympathy led him to do something about it. It first led him to give up the glories and riches of heaven, and then it led him to give up his life to save us. And a major in saving us was living a perfect life. That is why the temptation of Christ and victory of Satan is so important. On the cross Jesus not only took our sins upon himself, but he also gave us a perfect life; for God demands that we be perfect as he is perfect. And Christ couldn't give us his perfect life if he himself wasn't perfect. So if Jesus fell into temptation he would have sinned and he couldn't possibly be our Savior.

But Jesus withstood temptation, he was without sin. He lived a perfect life and he gave us that perfect life. His holiness or righteousness was credited to us. So Christ not only took away our sins but he made us holy in the eyes of God. As Paul says in his second letter to the Corinthians, **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** Now when God looks at us he doesn't see sinners who constantly fall to the devil's temptations. Rather he sees the perfect life of his son, Jesus Christ which is ours through faith in him.

This message is found only in the Bible. The fact that we are saved by the work of Christ alone without any work or help on our part is unique to Christianity. And all who believe in him will receive everything the Lord has done for us. And so we are motivated to **hold firmly to the faith that we possess.** We know the truth; we have a gracious and forgiving God who not only takes away what we couldn't have but he makes us what we need to be. We want all people to know and believe the truth. So we hold firmly to the truth and we share it with others that they may know and believe and thus be saved. And yet there is another way we can hold firmly to the faith we profess—we can hold firmly to God's Word and avoid sin. For when we are tempted he always gives us a way to say 'no' to sin and he strengthens us through the Word. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, **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.**

D. 1. Because of what Christ has done for us we are considered pure

and holy in the eyes of the Lord. And so we are able to approach him with freedom and confidence. We don't have to be afraid of his just wrath and punishment. We may be as guilty as Achan but because of Christ we are considered perfect and holy in the sight of the Lord. So we then can approach God with confidence. We can ask him for anything and we know that he is with us. For he is merciful and gracious Lord, who does not hold our sins against us but overcame temptation in our place so that we could live with him forever.

When we face the devil and his temptations we often lose; we stand defeated. It's hard for anyone to be undefeated in anything, impossible for us in the game of life. But Jesus—he truly is undefeated! He defeated Satan at his temptation, living a perfect life so that he could give it to us. And at his death and resurrection he won the ultimate victory which is now ours. And so we can say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, **thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**