



“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13).

Faith Resists Temptation

Central Truth: Satan uses your evil desires to tempt you.

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I have to struggle against temptation. Sometimes it comes with banners flying and bugles blowing. I can know it is a sin as soon as it comes to mind. At other times it comes quietly and is inside my defenses before I realize I am under attack. Temptation to sin is not an indication that one is weak or wicked. It is proof that one is human. What I experience in temptation is just what other people experience. And what we experience is just what Jesus experienced. Each temptation is *“common to man”* (I Corinthians 10:13) and Jesus *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15).

Why are we tempted to sin? (1) Our human society is depraved and under the control of Satan. (2) Our commitment to God must be challenged to prove its worth. (3) Our spiritual growth is aided when we pass successfully through a temptation. (4) Our faithfulness in temptation is a testimony in the spiritual realm, as we see in the temptation of Job. (5) Our temptations enable us to help others who are tempted. Do not yield to temptation.

Definition of Temptation

The King James Version of the Bible uses the word tempt with two different meanings. It is necessary to determine which meaning applies in

each verse where the word occurs.

Tempt means to test under trials. It commonly refers to outward circumstances which put you in a strait and show what you are made of. God “tempted” Abram by His call for Isaac to be offered up in death as a burnt offering (Genesis 22). Abram obeyed the command until God stopped him short of Isaac's death. There was no effort on God's part to get Abram to sin. It was a test to see whether or not Abram would truly follow God's will.

It is in this sense that we must interpret James 1:3, where the testing is called “*the trying of your faith.*” It is in this sense that we must interpret James 1:12, where it is called “*endureth temptation*” and means to persevere under trial. Some trials have no sin involved unless there is rebellion by the one tried. Other trials have sin at their very heart.

Tempt means to entice to evil. That is the meaning of the word in James 1:14: “*Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*” That is when sin is presented in such an attractive way that you want to try it. That type of temptation has a threefold source from which it issues: “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (1 John 2:16). That was what Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-6). That was what Jesus experienced in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-10). That is what happens to the Christian when his mind is seduced (led astray) from single-minded devotion and faithfulness to Christ (II Corinthians 11:3). That is the kind of temptation from which the Lord promises to deliver us (I Corinthians 10:13). Praise His name.

Source of Temptation (James 1:13)

From what source do temptations come? Testings for our benefit come from God; temptations to evil come from the devil. James speaks of enticement to evil when he writes, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*” (James 1:13).

Enticement to sin is never from God. He would have us free from sin. He never “plays” with us to see how much temptation we can endure before surrendering to sin. He gives us strength that we may bear our trials without sin.

I knew a man who blamed God for his sins. He said, “I can't help it. God made me like this.” Not so! God made each of us with a nature subject to sin and a spirit which can resist sin. We are living in a world where we will be tempted, but we have grace to win over every temptation. Never blame God if you fall in the midst of temptation. He did not bring the

enticement; instead, He came to you in it to enable you to win the victory over it.

Enticement to sin is always from Satan. Who started that old lie, “The devil made me do it”? It is not so. The devil can tempt you to sin, but he cannot make you sin. He tempts you by appealing to the depravity still within you and every other person — even the purest saint you know.

The devil enticed Eve to sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-6). The devil tried to get David to sin in numbering Israel (I Chronicles 21:1); he succeeded in enticing David to commit adultery with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11, 12). The devil tried to get Jesus to sin, but he failed (Matthew 4:1-10). Paul feared that the devil had led believers in Corinth and Thessalonica to sin (II Corinthians 11:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). And the devil will try to lead you into sin.

You have no reason to debate when you become aware of temptation to sin. You know that God will not entice you to do wrong. All temptation to sin is of the devil. Be warned; be prepared; be pure.

Course of Temptation (James 1:14, 15)

Read James 1:14, 15 very intently from your Bible. Underline the key words: “*drawn away,*” “*lust,*” “*enticed,*” “*conceived,*” “*sin,*” “*finished,*” and “*death.*” Look up those words in a good dictionary. There you have the course of temptation from beginning to end.

“*Lust*” simply means strong desire. It could be a strong desire for what is good or what is bad. Therefore, Galatians 5:17 speaks of the Holy Spirit lusting against the flesh and the flesh lusting against the Holy Spirit. It means each has a strong desire to control you. James 1:14 speaks of the strong desire of the flesh to control you and lead you into sin. It is possible for you to be beguiled and allured by your own evil desire to satisfy your passions. That is how the devil leads you into sin. Beware of excited passions which long for the forbidden thing.

Those desires which are normal and good in God's assigned place can become abnormal and wicked outside their assigned sphere. You make the decision whether you satisfy your passions in a proper or an improper way. The former is right; the latter is sin. “*Choose you this day whom you will serve*” in satisfying your normal desires.

To “*entice*” means “to bait a hook.” It is like food laid out for a wild animal which leads it step by step until it steps on a trigger and the trap is sprung. The animal had no idea it was in danger of being caught, so it walked onward, enjoying the bits of food it found. Only when the trap was

sprung did it realize that it had been enticed by what seemed good otherwise. The hook is always hidden until it is too late. No danger appears as the trap is approached.

That is the way the devil leads you into sin. It will feel good, or look beautiful, or make you important. (Do you remember the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?) You are not aware of the consequences of being caught in the baited trap until it is too late. And then it is too late, indeed.

“*Sin*” means rebellion, error, missing the mark. It is a willful and knowing transgression of God's will. Sin is not accidental; it is intentional. It is a violation of the known principles of God's law (I John 3:4). You know when you sin.

“*Death*” means separation from God. Sin brings death to the body, to the conscience, and to peace with God. It always destroys; it never builds up or benefits. It may look pleasing, but its end is always deep sorrow and regret. Beware!

Guard Against Temptation (James 1:16-18)

Your single-hearted devotion to Christ will be corrupted by compromise with evil. It must not be. Be conscious of the personal presence of the Lord. When temptation comes, remember that He is there to deliver you. He sees; He hears; He knows; He cares; He helps.

Receive provision from your Lord (verse 17). Every good act of giving and every good thing given comes from your heavenly Father. Before you use your resources (health, wealth, body, mind) for sin, consider from whom they have come. To use God's blessings for sin is like biting the hand that feeds you. There is “*no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” in Him. He never changes. What was right before Him in Bible times is right today. What He declared to be wrong then is wrong now. He enables you to overcome any temptation the devil puts before you, if you will look to Him for help (I Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18).

Fulfill the purposes of your Lord (verse 18). He has two great purposes in mind for you. (1) He purposes to make you a new person in Christ Jesus. So “*of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.*” (2) He purposes to make us a pattern of His new creation—“*a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*” What a blessed privilege it is to be so designed of God. What a terrible offense it would be to blight that divine purpose by willful sin. Flee from sin! God has wonderful plans for you.

Take a stand for purity before God. Here are four elements in

resisting temptation. (1) Resolve to be pure like young Daniel, who *“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank”* (Daniel 1:8). (2) Resist the impulse. To resist steadfastly in the faith is to have victory (I Peter 5:9), (3) Rely on the Lord for help. He will make a way so you can bear the trial (I Corinthians 10:13). (4) Run from the person or place of temptation. *“Flee...lusts”* (II Timothy 2:22). You can be pure.

In what areas are you tempted most often and most strongly? Build the defenses of your faith right there. Engage in prayer. Read and memorize Scripture. Discipline your body and mind. Cultivate the opposite graces. And live by this principle of Titus 2:12: *“Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”*

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the two meanings of tempt?
2. Why do faithful Christians experience temptation?
3. What is the source of temptation to sin?
4. What is the Bible meaning of “lust”?
5. How might Satan entice a person to sin?
6. How does sin bring “death”?
7. How can you walk before the Lord to avoid sin?
8. What purposes did God have in your salvation?
9. What four things can keep you from falling into sin?
10. How can you build resistance in areas of your weakness?