

TEMPTATION

By Pastor Art Watkins

In 1 Thessalonians 3:5 Paul wrote: ***For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.***

The word temptation means; *enticement to evil by arguments, by flattery, or by the offer of some real or apparent good. That which is presented to the mind as an inducement to evil. It's something or someone who lures and entices you to do wrong or evil.*

Temptation is something every Christian will have to put up with till the second coming of Christ. When God saved you from sin and hell he did not save you from temptation. As long as you live in this present evil world with an old nature you will be tempted and enticed to do that which is wrong and evil. Temptation is a constant problem that comes in many forms and it's something we must gain the victory over if we expect to live a victorious life in this present evil world.

Many Christians have fallen and become unproductive Christians because of giving into temptation. In the parable of the sower and the seed (Luke 8) the sower sowed seed on the rocks and it says: ***They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*** From these verses we see the danger of giving into temptation. It can cause a Christian to fall and not get up. Therefore, every Christian ought to be able to recognize temptation when they see and hear it and know how to overcome it.

(1) Temptation Is Not Sin

Hebrews 4:15 says: ***For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.***

Many assume that because they have the desire to commit sin they are guilty of sin. They assume the desire itself is sin. Some people even go as far to say if you have temptation to do evil you are lost. But that can't be so Christ himself was: ***In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*** Jesus Christ was tempted with every temptation we have ever had. Any and every thing that tempts us tempted him. He had temptations we know

nothing about. To have temptation is not sin. Sin is giving into temptation which Christ did not do. He has a perfect record against sin and temptation. That is why it is important for us to see how he overcame temptation in his life. If we follow his example we too can overcome temptation.

(2) Temptation Is Universal

In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul wrote: ***There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.***

Temptation is common to all men. All men and women have the same common temptations. It does not matter what your race, sex, color, nationality, financial standing is we all have common temptations. What tempts you tempts me and vice versa. Some folks deny they are tempted to commit the same sins as other men. People who say such things are self righteous, proud and deceived. The fact is, all men have the same common temptations to commit the same sins. Your temptation is not a special case. There are millions just like you who wrestle with the same temptations you have.

Because temptation is universal we cannot hide from temptation. We will find it at home, in school, on the job, in the store, in prayer, on the internet, while you witness and even in church. Where ever the world, flesh and the devil are present, temptation is present. It's universal.

(3) Temptation Feeds on Lust

James 1:13-15 says: ***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: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.***

The reason we give into temptation is because we choose to out of our own lust. The flesh and the Devil know the things we lust after and they tempt us according to our lusts and desires. They know our track record and what gets our attention. They know what pushes our button. When the Devil tempts us he will tempt us with the things we lust after. He will work on our private lusts and desires, for he knows what they are. And if we give into temptation it's because we choose to out of lust.

Giving into temptation is a choice we make and we have no one to blame but ourselves. It's not because of our environment, education, ignorance, mother or father, sister or brother or friends or because of a full moon. We give into temptation because of our own selfish lusts. No one puts a gun to our head and makes us give into temptation.

(4) Temptation Comes In Three Categories

1 John 2:16 says: ***For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.***

In this verse is found the three areas in our lives in which we are tempted. When you are tempted by the world, flesh or the devil they will tempt you by one of these three methods:

The lust of the flesh - *Temptations that appeal to the body.*

Many temptations appeal to the body. Temptations that appeal to the body are those things that appeal to the five physical senses. The things you see, hear, smell, taste and touch.

The lust of the eyes - *Temptations that appeal to the soul.*

The eyes are the windows of the soul. Temptations that affect the soul are those that appeal to the imagination, thoughts, conscience, mind, memory, reason and affections. Many sins begin in the mind and imagination before they are acted out in the flesh. (See David- 2 Sam.11:2)

The pride of life – *Temptations that appeal to the spirit.*

Temptations of the spirit appeal to pride, wisdom, intellect and many of them are religious in nature.

Every temptation you will ever have will fall into one of these three categories. These are the same three areas in which the devil tempted Adam and Christ. In Genesis 3 when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil it says this about the tree:

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food - **Lust of the flesh.***

*That it was pleasant to the eyes - **Lust of the eyes.***

*A tree desired to make one wise - **Pride of life.***

Adam and Eve gave into temptation even though they lived in a perfect environment under ideal conditions.

When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness in Matthew 4 it says:

*Command that these stones be made bread - **Lust of the flesh.***

*Cast thyself down - **Pride of life.***

*Sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them - **The lust of the eyes.***

Christ was tempted by the devil 40 days and nights under the worst conditions and circumstances. He was tempted in a barren wilderness after he had fasted 40 days and nights and was weak and hungry. But he

did not give into temptation. Why? Because he used the only weapon that can defeat the devil, which is the word of God. When tempted by the devil by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life Jesus responded to each temptation by quoting the scriptures. Each time the devil tempted him Jesus said; *as it is written*. Finally the devil gave up and left him alone.

This shows us the word of God gives us the advantage over the devil no matter what the conditions or circumstances we may be under when the devil tempts us. This is why every Christian ought to read their Bible through at least once a year to learn what verses to use to overcome the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The scriptures Christ quoted matched the temptations of the devil. If the Son of God used the word of God to overcome temptation, do you think you can overcome temptation without it?

(5) Temptation Tries Our Faith

James 1:2-3 says: ***My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.***

Temptation puts our faith on trial. It puts it to the test. How we handle temptation is a barometer of our faith. If you want to find out what kind of faith you have just notice how you respond to temptation. You will find out what kind of faith you have by how you respond to the temptations in your life. If you give into temptation your faith is weak. If you overcome temptation your faith is strong.

God will allow you to be tempted as he did Christ to show you what kind of faith you really have. You will never know how strong or weak your faith is until it gets tested by temptation. You may think you are strong when the truth is you may be weak. Temptation will teach you.

(6) Temptation Is Greater At Certain Times, Places and People

The Devil picked the worst ***time and place*** to tempt the Lord. He tempted him during a 40 day fast in a barren wilderness when he was weak and hungry. The Devil knows the best time and place to tempt you and there are times and places when temptation is much greater.

Times

Even though there are certain times it seems temptation is greater, the reality is, the devil tempts us at all times. He tempted Adam in paradise, but he tempted Christ in the wilderness. He tempts us when we are defeated and yet when we are victorious. He tempts us when we are financially

broke and yet when we are financially secure. He tempts us when we are sick and yet when we are well. He tempts us when the bottom falls out and yet when everything is going right. He tempts us at all times and that is why we should never let our guard down.

Places

There are places every Christian ought to stay away from because temptation is much greater in those places. If you go into those places you are going to be too weak to overcome temptation. It obvious temptation is much greater in places like bars, night clubs, strip joints and gambling joints. It is much greater on the beach, which in south Alabama are nothing more than legal nudist colonies. There are even some carnal churches that will tempt you to do evil by their lack of moral convictions. They are worldlier than the world. Stay away from any place, even a church, where you know you will be tempted by the lust of the flesh.

People

There are certain people we need to stay away from for when we are around them they tempt us to sin. When I got saved I lost every friend I had, but I thank God I lost them, because if I would have stayed around them they would have pulled me back into the world with them again. There are people you know right now who tempt you when you are around them. Even carnal Christians and preachers can tempt you. There are people and even Christians you must be friends with at a distance.

2 Timothy 2:22 says: ***Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.***

Proverbs 13:20 says: ***He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.***

The people you keep company with have an effect upon your morals whether you are aware of it or not. Friendships are contagious, so make sure you pick the right ones as Paul and Solomon said.

(7) You Cannot Overcome Temptation By Yourself

Resolutions, promises, 12 step programs, turning over new leafs all have some merit, but by themselves they have no lasting power. The world, flesh and the devil have a way of getting around these things. Temptation is spiritual warfare and cannot be won in the flesh or the power of the flesh. If you are trying to defeat temptation in the power of your flesh, you will fail. Jesus Christ overcame temptation with the word of God. It's the only

weapon that can successfully overcome temptation. David said; ***Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.*** This tells me that the word of God can keep you from sin. The word of God also assures us that we can overcome sin and temptation.

In Romans 6 the believer participates in the death of Christ. We were baptized by the Spirit into his death and his death is counted as our death. We are told to reckon ourselves to be dead with Christ especially when it comes to sin. Why? Sin has no power or influence over a dead man. Nothing has any power or influence over a dead man. You can't get a dead man to follow you, talk to you, walk with you, agree with you, listen to you, or do anything you tell him to do. Dead men do not respond to any thing or any one. That is why God baptized us into Christ's death. God made us partakers of Christ's death, so that sin will have no power or influence over us, for nothing has power or influence over a dead man.

How do we respond to sin and temptation? We respond as dead men which is no response at all. It's the only response that works and we can do it. Sin does not have dominion over true believers according to Romans 6:14, because we are dead to sin. If it does not have dominion over us then we can have victory over every temptation the world, flesh and the devil throws at us. We need to believe what God says in Romans 6 about sin and our freedom from it and act upon it by faith.

(8) God Limits Our Temptations

1 Corinthians 10:13 says: ***There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.***

God will not allow you to be tempted above or beyond what you are able to bear. Every temptation you have had in the past or will have in the future can be overcome.

(9) There Is Always A Way To Escape Temptation

1 Corinthians 10:13 says that God: ***Will with the temptation also make a way to escape.***

Be honest, if you think back on the temptations you gave into in the past there was a way to escape it. There is always a way you can escape every temptation. You may have to get up and run as Joseph did, but there is always a way out. But most of the time we are not looking for a way out, but an excuse to give in.

(10) We Can Be Guilty Of Tempting God And Others

1 Corinthians 10:9 says concerning Israel in the wilderness: **Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.**

The world, flesh and the Devil will tempt you to commit certain sins that will in turn tempt God to chastise you if you commit them and one of them is fornication. In Romans 14:13 Paul said: ***That no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*** This is a warning that we should never tempt a brother in Christ to do something that will cause him to stumble and fall. Many weak Christians have stumbled and fell into sin, even deep sin, by the temptations of carnal Christians and preachers.

How to Overcome Temptation

***If temptation feeds on lust, we must overcome lust to overcome temptation.**

Galatians 5:16: ***This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.***

***If temptation is greater at certain places and around certain people, we must be careful about the places we go and the company we keep.**

Psalms 110:63: ***I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.***

***If temptation is spiritual warfare only God can win the battle against temptation.**

2 Peter 2:9: ***The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.***

Hebrews 2:17-18: ***Wherefore in all things it behoved him (Christ) to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.***

***If Christ won the victory over temptation then we must fight against it the way he did with the Word of God.**

Psalms 119:11: ***Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.***

Ephesians 6:16-17: ***Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the***

helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Hebrews 4:12: **For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

***If temptation tries our faith we need to develop a strong faith to overcome temptation.**

1 John 2:14: **I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.**