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Forward

There are many stories throughout the Bible where people were tempted.

Many of them resisted the temptation, and many of them yielded to the temptation.

In this study we will see what reaction to temptation that God is requiring. Those who can stand the test, and become an example of Kingdom Principles will be well pleasing to God.

James 1:15-16

These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death.
So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters.

James 4:7

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.

May these examples bless you, keep and strengthen you as you face life's temptations. May you always be an overcomer.

Chapter 1

Why Satan Tempts Us

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?

Disguised as a crafty serpent, Satan came to tempt Eve. Satan at one time was an angel who rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven. As a created being, Satan has definite limitations. Although he is trying to tempt everyone away from God, he will not be the final victor. In Genesis 3:14-15, God promises that Satan will be crushed by one of the woman’s offspring, the Messiah.

And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, you shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, you shall not surely die:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Why does Satan tempt us? Temptation is Satan’s invitation to give in to his kind of life and give up on God’s kind of life. Satan tempted Eve and succeeded in getting her to sin.

Ever since then, he's been busy getting people to sin. He even tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:11). But Jesus did not sin!

How could Eve have resisted temptation? By following the same guidelines we can follow. First, we must realize that *being tempted* is not a sin. We have not sinned until we *give in* to the temptation. Then, to resist temptation, we must (1) pray for strength to resist, (2) run, sometimes literally, and (3) say no when confronted with what we know is wrong. James 1:12 tells of the blessings and rewards for those who don't give in when tempted.

The serpent, Satan, tempted Eve by getting her to doubt God's goodness.

He implied that God was strict, stingy, and selfish for not wanting Eve to share his knowledge of good and evil. Satan made Eve forget that entire God had given her and, instead, focus on the one thing she couldn't have. We fall into trouble, too, when we dwell on the few things we don't have rather than on the countless things God has given us. The next time you are feeling sorry for yourself and what you don't have, consider all you *do* have and thank God. Then your doubts won't lead you into sin.

Ways to Resist Temptation

2 Samuel 11:3-4

And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he Lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

As David looked from the roof of the palace, he saw a beautiful woman bathing, and he was filled with lust.

David should have left the roof and fled the temptation. Instead, he entertained the temptation by inquiring about Bathsheba. The results were devastating.

To Flee Temptation

- (1) Ask God in earnest prayer to help you stay away from people, places, and situations that may tempt you.
- (2) Memorize and meditate on portions of Scripture that combat your specific weaknesses. At the root of most temptation is a real need or desire that God can fill, but we must trust in his timing.

Avoid Temptation that too strong for you.

Genesis 13:12

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Good pasture and available water seemed like a wise choice to Lot at first. But he failed to recognize that wicked Sodom could provide temptations strong enough to destroy his family.

Have you chosen to live or work in a “Sodom”? Even though you may be strong enough to resist the temptations, other members of your family may not.

While God commands us to reach people in the “Sodom” near us, we must be careful not to become like the very people we are trying to reach.

Some are tempted to follow today’s “idols”.

Genesis 35:2

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

Why did the people have these idols (“foreign gods”)?

Idols were sometimes seen more as good luck charms than as gods. Some Israelites, even though they worshiped God, had idols in their homes, just as some Christians today own good luck trinkets.

Jacob believed that idols should have no place in his household. He wanted nothing to divert his family’s spiritual focus.

Jacob ordered his household to get rid of their gods.

Unless we remove idols from our lives, they can ruin our faith. What idols do we have? An idol is anything we put before God.

Idols don’t have to be physical objects; they can be thoughts or desires. Like Jacob, we should get rid of anything that could stand between God and us.

Resists temptation when under pressure.

Genesis 39:9

There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Potiphar’s wife failed to seduce Joseph, who resisted this temptation by saying it would be a sin against God. Joseph didn’t say, “I’d be hurting you,” or “I’d be sinning against Potiphar,” or “I’d be sinning against myself.”

Under pressure, such excuses are easily rationalized away. Remember that sexual sin is not just between two consenting adults. It is an act of disobedience against God.

Sometimes you must literally run away from temptation.

Genesis 39:10-15

And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

Joseph avoided Potiphar's wife as much as possible. He refused her advances and finally *ran* from her.

Sometimes merely trying to avoid temptation is not enough. We must turn and run, especially when the temptations seem very strong, as is often the case in sexual temptations.

2 Tim. 2:22

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Running away is sometimes considered cowardly. But wise people realize that removing themselves physically from temptation often can be the most courageous action to take. Timothy, a young man, was warned to flee anything that produced evil thoughts.

Do you have a recurring temptation that is difficult to resist? Remove yourself physically from any situation that stimulates your desire to sin.

Knowing when to run is as important in spiritual battle as knowing when and how to fight. (See also 1 Tim. 6:11.)

Chapter 2

Some are tempted to Form Alliances with Pagan Culture.

Numbers 25:1-2

And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

This verse shows the great challenge Israel had to face. The most dangerous problem for Moses and Joshua was not Jericho's hostile army, but the ever-present temptation to compromise with the pagan Canaanite religions and cultures.

The Bible doesn't say how the Israelite men got involved in sexual immorality. We do know that sacred prostitution was a common practice among Canaanite religions.

At first, they didn't think about worshiping idols; they were just interested in sex. Before long they started attending local feasts and family celebrations that involved idol worship. Soon they were in over their heads, absorbed into the practices of the pagan culture.

Their desire for fun and pleasure caused them to loosen their spiritual commitment. Have you relaxed your standards in order to justify your desires?

It is easy to see how the Israelites were misled, for Balaam seemed to say and do all the right things—at least for a while (Numbers 22-24).

Not until Balaam had inflicted great damage on them did the Israelites realize that he was greedy, used sorcery, and was deeply involved in pagan religious practices. We must be careful to weigh both the words and the deeds of those who claim to offer spiritual help.

Baal was the most popular god in Canaan, the land Israel was about to enter.

Represented by a bull, symbol of strength and fertility, he was the god of the rains and harvest.

The Israelites were continually attracted to Baal worship, in which prostitution played a large part, throughout their years in Canaan. Because Baal was so popular, his name was often used as a generic title for all the local gods.

There is danger of letting you be tempted.

'Deut. 12:30-31

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, how did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

God did not want the Israelites even to ask about the pagan religions surrounding them. Idolatry completely permeated the land of Canaan.

It was too easy to get drawn into the subtle temptations of seemingly harmless practices.

Sometimes curiosity can cause us to stumble. Knowledge of evil is harmful if the evil becomes too tempting to resist.

To resist curiosity about harmful practices shows discretion and obedience.

Without God, temptation can become too great.

Judges 1:1

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel

asked the Lord, saying, “Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them”?

After wandering for 40 years in the desert, a new generation is ready to enter Canaan. But first God prepares both Joshua and the nation by teaching them the importance of courageous and consistent faith.

The nation then miraculously crosses the Jordan River to begin the long-awaited conquest of the Promised land.

Like Joshua, we too need faith to begin and continue living the Christian life.

As the book of Joshua opens, the Israelites are camped along the east bank of the Jordan River at the very edge of the Promised Land and they are completing the mourning period for Moses, who has just died (Deut. 34:7-8).

Thirty-nine years earlier (after spending a year at Mount Sinai receiving God’s law), the Israelites had an opportunity to enter the Promised land, but they failed to trust God to give them victory.

As a result, God did not allow them to enter the land, but made them wander in the desert until the disobedient generation had all died.

During their desert wanderings, the Israelites obeyed God’s laws. They also taught the new generation to obey God’s laws so that they might enter the promised land (also called Canaan).

As the children grew, they were often reminded that faith and obedience to God brought victory, while unbelief and disobedience brought tragedy. When the last of the older generation had died and the new generation had become adults, the Israelites prepared to make their long-awaited claim on the Promised Land.

Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel’s leader. What qualifications did he have to become the leader of a nation?

(1) God appointed him (Numbers 27:18-23).

(2) He was one of only two living eyewitnesses to the Egyptian plagues and the exodus from Egypt.

(3) He was Moses' personal aide for 40 years.

(4) Of the 12 spies, only he and Caleb showed complete confidence that God would help them conquer the land.

Temptation attacks our weak areas.

1 Kings 11:3-4

And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

Solomon handled great pressures in running the government, but he could not handle the pressure from his wives who wanted him to worship their gods.

In marriage and close friendships, it is difficult to resist pressure to compromise. Our love leads us to identify with the desires of those we care about.

Faced with such pressure, Solomon at first resisted it, maintaining pure faith. Then he tolerated a more widespread practice of idolatry. Finally he became involved in idolatrous worship, rationalizing away the potential danger to himself and to the kingdom.

It is because we want to please and identify with our loved ones that God asks us not to marry those who do not share our commitment to him.

Matthew 4:1

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

This time of testing showed that Jesus really was the Son of God, able to overcome the devil and his temptations. A person has not shown true obedience if he or she has never had an opportunity to disobey. We read in Deut. 8:2 that God led Israel into the desert to humble and test them.

The devil, also called Satan, tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and here he tempted Jesus in the desert.

Satan is a fallen angel. He is real, not symbolic, and is constantly fighting against those who follow and obey God. Satan's temptations are real, and he is always trying to get us to live his way or our way rather than God's way. Jesus will one day reign over all creation, but Satan tried to force his hand and get him to declare his kingship prematurely.

If Jesus had given in, his mission on earth—to die for our sins and give us the opportunity to have eternal life—would have been lost. When temptations seem especially strong, or when you think you can rationalize giving in, consider whether Satan may be trying to block God's purposes for your life or for someone else's life.

This temptation by the devil shows us that Jesus was human, and it gave Jesus the opportunity to reaffirm God's plan for his ministry. It also gives us an example to follow when we are tempted. Jesus' temptation was an important demonstration of his sinlessness. He would face temptation and not give in.

Jesus was tempted by the devil, but he never sinned! Although we may feel dirty after being tempted, we should remember that temptation itself is not sin. We sin when we give in and disobey God. Remembering this will help us turn away from the temptation.

Jesus wasn't tempted inside the temple or at his baptism but in the desert where he was tired, alone, and hungry, and thus most vulnerable.

The devil often tempts us when we are vulnerable—when we are under physical or emotional stress (for example, lonely, tired, weighing big decisions, or faced with uncertainty).

But he also likes to tempt us through our strengths, where we are most susceptible to pride (see the note on +Luke 4:3ff). We must guard at all times against his attacks.

The devil's temptations focused on three crucial areas:

- (1) Physical needs and desires

(2) Possessions and power, and

(3) Pride

Jesus did not give in. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus “has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” He knows firsthand what we are experiencing, and he is willing and able to help us in our struggles.

When you are tempted, turn to him for strength.

Chapter 3

When to Prepare for Temptation

2 Chron. 14:7

Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the Lord our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion.

“Rest on every side” means that Judah had peace with all her neighbors.

Times of peace are not just for resting. They allow us to prepare for times of trouble. King Asa recognized the period of peace as the right time to build his defenses—the moment of attack would be too late.

It is also difficult to withstand spiritual attack unless defenses are prepared beforehand. Decisions about how to face temptations must be made with cool heads long before we feel the heat of temptation. Build your defenses now before temptation strikes.

Don't be tempted by the wealth of wicked.

Psalm 73:1-20

Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compassed them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.

Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. [16] When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castest them down into destruction. [19] How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes; so, O Lord, when thou awakes, thou shalt despise their image.

In this psalm, Asaph explains that until he entered God's sanctuary, he could not understand the justice in allowing the wicked to thrive while the righteous endured hardship. But when he saw that one-day justice would be done, he acknowledged God's wisdom.

Two strong themes wind their way through these verses:

- (1) The wicked prosper, leaving faithful people wondering why they bother to be good, and
- (2) The wealth of the wicked looks so inviting that faithful people may wish they could trade places. But these two themes come to unexpected ends, for the wealth of the wicked suddenly loses its power at death and the rewards for the good suddenly take on eternal value.

What seemed like wealth is now waste, and what seemed worthless now lasts forever. Don't wish you could trade places with evil people to get their wealth. One day they will wish they could trade places with you and have your eternal wealth.

Asaph realized that the rich who put their hope, joy, and confidence in their wealth live in a dream world. A dream exists only in the mind of the dreamer.

Don't let your life's goals be so unreal that you awaken too late and miss the reality of God's truth. Happiness and hope can be a reality, but only when they are based on God, not on riches. Because reality is in God, we should get as close to him as we can in order to be realistic about life.

Preparing for Temptation

Proverbs 5:11-13

And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!

At the end of your life, it will be too late to ask for advice. When desire is fully activated, people don't want advice—they want satisfaction.

The best time to learn the dangers and foolishness of going after forbidden sex (or anything else that is harmful) is long before the temptation comes.

Resistance is easier if the decision has already been made. Don't wait to see what happens. Prepare for temptation by deciding *now* how you will act when you face it.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel 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: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel resolved not to eat this food, either because the meat was some food forbidden by Jewish law, like pork (see Leviticus 11), or because accepting the king's food and drink was the first step toward depending on his gifts and favors.

Although Daniel was in a culture that did not honor God, he still obeyed God's laws.

Resolve is a strong word that means to be devoted to principle and to be committed to a course of action.

When Daniel resolved not to defile himself, he was being true to a lifelong determination to do what was right and not to give in to the pressures around him.

We too, are often assaulted by pressures to compromise our standards and live more like the world around us. Merely wanting or preferring God's will and way is not enough to stand against the onslaught of temptation. Like Daniel, we must resolve to obey God.

It is easier to resist temptation if you have thought through your convictions well before the temptation arrives.

Daniel and his friends made their decision to be faithful to the laws of God before they were faced with the king's delicacies, so they did not hesitate to stick with their convictions.

We will get into trouble if we have not previously decided where to draw the line. Before such situations arise, decide on your commitments. Then when temptation comes, you will be ready to say no.

Temptation distracts us from our commitments.

Jeremiah 2:2

Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

In this section, the marriage analogy sharply contrasts God's love for his people with their love for other gods and reveals Judah's faithlessness. Jeremiah condemned Judah (he sometimes called Judah "Jerusalem," the name of its capital city) for seeking security in worthless, changeable things rather than the unchangeable God. We may be tempted to seek security from possessions, people, or our own abilities, but these will fail us. There is no lasting security apart from the eternal God.

Why Jesus was tempted.

Mark 1:12-13

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Jesus left the crowds and went into the desert where Satan tempted him.

Temptation is bad for us only when we give in. We should not hate or resent times of inner testing, because through them God can strengthen our character and teach us valuable lessons. When you face Satan and must deal with his temptations and the turmoil he brings, remember Jesus. He used God's Word against Satan and won. You can do the same.

Satan is an angel who rebelled against God. He is real, not symbolic, and is constantly working against God and those who obey him. Satan tempted Eve in the garden and persuaded her to sin; he tempted Jesus in the desert and did not persuade him to fall. To be tempted is not a sin. Tempting others or giving in to temptation *is* sin. For a more detailed account of Jesus' temptation, read Matthew 4:1-11.

To identify fully with human beings, Jesus had to endure Satan's temptations. Although Jesus is God, he is also man. And as fully human, he was not exempt from Satan's attacks. Because Jesus faced temptations and overcame them, he can assist us in two important ways: (1) as an example of how to face temptation without sinning, and (2) as a helper who knows just what we need because he went through the same experience.

Chapter 4

Temptation is real, not imagined.

Matthew 4:1

Being Tempted is not a sin, but giving in to Temptation is sin.

*Jesus entered human history when the land of Palestine was controlled by Rome and considered an insignificant outpost of the vast and mighty Roman empire. The presence of Roman soldiers in Israel gave the Jews military peace, but at the price of oppression, slavery, injustice, and immorality. Into this kind of world came the promised Messiah.

Temptation attacks those Strengths that can lead us to Pride.

Luke 4:3

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Satan may tempt us to doubt Christ's true identity. He knows that once we begin to question whether or not Jesus is God, it's far easier to get us to do what he wants.

Times of questioning can help us sort out our beliefs and strengthen our faith, but those times can also be dangerous. If you are dealing with doubt, realize that you are especially vulnerable to temptation. Even as you search for answers, protect yourself by meditating on the unshakable truths of God's Word.

Sometimes what we are tempted to do isn't wrong in itself.

Turning stones into bread wasn't necessarily bad. The sin was not in the act but in the reason behind it.

The devil was trying to get Jesus to take a shortcut, to solve Jesus' immediate problem at the expense of his long-range goals, to seek comfort at the sacrifice of his discipline.

Satan often works that way—persuading us to take action, even right action, for the wrong reason or at the wrong time. The fact that something is not wrong in itself does not mean that it is good for you at a given time.

Many people sin by attempting to fulfill legitimate desires outside of God's will or ahead of his timetable. First ask, "Is the Holy Spirit leading me to do this? Or is Satan trying to get me off the track?"

Often we are tempted not through our weaknesses, but through our strengths.

The devil tempted Jesus where he was strong. Jesus had power over stones, the kingdoms of the world, and even angels, and Satan wanted him to use that power without regard to his mission. When we give in to the devil and wrongly use our strengths, we become proud and self-reliant. Trusting in our own powers, we feel little need of God.

To avoid this trap, we must realize that all our strengths are God's gifts to us, and we must dedicate those strengths to his service.

Temptation is Satisfying Right desires in Wrong ways.

Use Scripture to combat Temptation

Matthew 4:3-4

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, Command that these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Jesus was hungry and weak after fasting for 40 days, but he chose not to use his divine power to satisfy his natural desire for food.

Food, hunger, and eating are good, but the timing was wrong. Jesus was in the desert to fast, not to eat. And because Jesus had given up the unlimited, independent use of his divine power in order to experience humanity fully, he wouldn't use his power to change the stones to bread.

We also may be tempted to satisfy a perfectly normal desire in a wrong way or at the wrong time. If we indulge in sex before marriage or if we steal to get food, we are trying to satisfy God-given desires in wrong ways.

Remember, many of your desires are normal and good, but God wants you to satisfy them in the right way and at the right time.

Jesus was able to resist all of the devil's temptations because he not only knew Scripture, but he also obeyed it.

Ephesians 6:17 says that God's Word is a sword to use in spiritual combat.

Knowing Bible verses is an important step in helping us resist the devil's attacks, but we must also obey the Bible.

Note that Satan had memorized Scripture, but he failed to obey it. Knowing and obeying the Bible helps us follow God's desires.

Chapter 5

Often Temptation comes in attractive and convincing forms.

Matthew 4:6

Matthew 4:6

And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

The devil used Scripture to try to convince Jesus to sin! Sometimes friends or associates will present attractive and convincing reasons why you should try something you know is wrong.

They may even find Bible verses that *seem* to support their viewpoint. Study the Bible carefully, especially the broader contexts of specific verses, so that you understand God's principles for living and what he wants for your life.

Only if you really understand what the *whole* Bible says will you be able to recognize errors of interpretation when people take verses out of context and twist them to say what they want them to say.

God Never Leads us into Temptation.

Matthew 6:13

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

God doesn't lead us into temptations, but sometimes he allows us to be tested by them. As disciples, we should pray to be delivered from these trying times and for deliverance from Satan ("the evil one") and his deceit.

All Christians struggle with temptation. Sometimes it is so subtle that we don't even realize what is happening to us. God has promised that he won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

In a culture filled with moral depravity and sin-inducing pressures, Paul gave strong encouragement to the Corinthians about temptation. He said:

- (1) wrong desires and temptations happen to everyone, so don't feel you've been singled out;
- (2) others have resisted temptation, and so can you;
- (3) any temptation can be resisted because God will help you resist it.

God helps you resist temptation by helping you

- (1) recognize those people and situations that give you trouble,
- (2) run from anything you know is wrong,

(3) choose to do only what is right,

(4) pray for God's help, and

(5) seek friends who love God and can offer help when you are tempted. Running from a tempting situation is your first step on the way to victory

2 Tim. 2:22

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Running away is sometimes considered cowardly. But wise people realize that removing themselves physically from temptation often can be the most courageous action to take. Timothy, a young man, was warned to flee anything that produced evil thoughts.

Do you have a recurring temptation that is difficult to resist? Remove yourself physically from any situation that stimulates your desire to sin. Knowing when to run is as important in spiritual battle as knowing when and how to fight

1 Tim. 6:11

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Paul uses active and forceful verbs to describe the Christian life: flee, pursue, fight, take hold. Some think Christianity is a passive religion that advocates waiting for God to act.

But we must have an *active* faith, obeying God with courage and doing what we know is right. Is it time for action on your part? Don't wait—get going!

Ask God to help you recognize temptation and to give you strength to overcome it and choose God's way instead.

Temptation will never leaves us permanently.

James 1:13-14

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither temptS he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

The crown of life is like the victory wreath given to winning athletes (see 1 Cor. 9:25). God's crown of life is not glory and honor here on earth, but the reward of eternal life—living with God forever. The way to be in God's winners' circle is by loving him and staying faithful even under pressure.

Temptation comes from evil desires inside us, not from God. It begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on the thought and allow it to become an action. Like a snowball rolling downhill, sin grows more destructive the more we let it have its way. The best time to stop a temptation is before it is too strong or moving too fast to control.

People who live for God often wonder why they still have temptations. Does God tempt them? God *tests* people, but he does not *tempt* them by trying to seduce them into sin. God allows Satan to tempt people, however, in order to refine their faith and to help them grow in their dependence on Christ.

We can resist the temptation to sin by turning to God for strength and choosing to obey his Word.

It is easy to blame others and make excuses for evil thoughts and wrong actions.

Excuses include:

- (1) It's the other person's fault;
- (2) I couldn't help it;
- (3) Everybody's doing it;
- (4) It was just a mistake;
- (5) Nobody's perfect;
- (6) The devil made me do it;

(7) I was pressured into it;

(8) I didn't know it was wrong;

(9) God is tempting me.

A person who makes excuses is trying to shift the blame from himself or herself to something or someone else.

A Christian, on the other hand, accepts responsibility for his or her wrongs, confesses them, and asks God for forgiveness.

Chapter 6

Holy Spirit won't make us Immune to Temptation

Acts 5:3

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Even after the Holy Spirit had come, the believers were not immune to Satan's temptations.

Although Christ defeated Satan at the cross, he was still actively trying to make the believers stumble—as he does today (Ephes. 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8).

Satan's overthrow is inevitable, but it will not occur until the last days, when Christ returns to judge the world (Rev. 20:10).

The sin Ananias and Sapphira committed was not stinginess or holding back part of the money—it was their choice whether or not to sell the land and how much to give.

Their sin was lying to God and God's people—saying they gave the whole amount but holding back some for themselves and trying to make themselves appear more generous than they really were.

This act was judged harshly because dishonesty, greed, and covetousness are destructive in a church, preventing the Holy Spirit from working effectively. All lying is bad, but when we lie to try to deceive God and his people about our relationship with him, we destroy our testimony about Christ.

Resisting temptation of sexual sin.

***1 Cor. 7:3-5**

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Sexual temptations are difficult to withstand because they appeal to the normal and natural desires that God has given us. Marriage provides God's way to satisfy these natural sexual desires and to strengthen the partners against temptation.

Married couples have the responsibility to care for each other; therefore, husbands and wives should not withhold themselves sexually from one another, but should fulfill each other's needs and desires.

The Corinthian church was in turmoil because of the immorality of the culture around them.

Some Greeks, in rejecting immorality, rejected sex and marriage altogether.

The Corinthian Christians wondered if this was what they should do also, so they asked Paul several questions: “Because sex is perverted, shouldn’t we also abstain in marriage?”

“If my spouse is unsaved, should I seek a divorce?” “Should unmarried people and widows remain unmarried?”

Paul answered many of these questions by saying, “For now, stay put. Be content in the situation where God has placed you. If you’re married, don’t seek to be single. If you’re single, don’t seek to be married. Live God’s way, one day at a time, and he will show you what to do.”

Spiritually, our bodies belong to God when we become Christians because Jesus Christ bought us by paying the price to release us from sin.

Physically, our bodies belong to our spouses because God designed marriage so that, through the union of husband and wife, the two become one (Genesis 2:24).

Paul stressed complete equality in sexual relationships. Neither male nor female should seek dominance or autonomy.

Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God. One is not morally better than the other, and both are valuable to accomplishing God’s purposes.

It is important for us, therefore, to accept our present situation. When Paul said he wished that all people were like him (i.e., unmarried), he was expressing his desire that more people would devote themselves *completely* to the ministry without the added concerns of spouse and family, as he had done.

He was not criticizing marriage—after all, it is God’s created way of providing companionship and populating the earth.

Sexual pressure is not the best motive for getting married, but it is better to marry the right person than to “burn with passion.”

Many new believers in Corinth thought that all sex was wrong, and so engaged couples were deciding not to get married.

In this passage, Paul was telling couples who wanted to marry that they should not frustrate their normal sexual drives by avoiding marriage.

This does not mean, however, that people who have trouble controlling themselves should marry the first person who comes along. It is better to deal with the pressure of desire than to deal with an unhappy marriage.

Recognize your areas of weakness to.

Romans 14:1

Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations.

Who is weak in faith and who is strong? We are all weak in some areas and strong in others. Our faith is strong in an area if we can survive contact with sinners without falling into their patterns.

It is weak in an area if we must avoid certain activities, people, or places in order to protect our spiritual life. It is important to take a self-inventory in order to find out our strengths and weaknesses.

Whenever in doubt, we should ask, “Can I do that without sinning? Can I influence others for good, rather than being influenced by them?”

In areas of strength, we should not fear being defiled by the world; rather we should go and serve God. In areas of weakness, we need to be cautious. If we have a strong faith but shelter it, we are not doing Christ’s work in the world. If we have a weak faith but expose it, we are being extremely foolish.

This verse assumes there will be differences of opinion in the church (disputable matters). Paul says we are not to quarrel about issues that are matters of opinion.

Differences should not be feared or avoided, but accepted and handled with love.

Don't expect everyone, even in the best possible church, to agree on every subject. Through sharing ideas we can come to a fuller understanding of what the Bible teaches. Accept, listen to, and respect others.

Differences of opinion need not cause division. They can be a source of learning and richness in our relationships.

What is weak faith? Paul is speaking about immature faith that has not yet developed the muscle it needs to stand against external pressures.

For example, if a person who once worshiped idols were to become a Christian, he might understand perfectly well that Christ saved him through faith and that idols have no real power. Still, because of his past associations, he might be badly shaken if he knowingly ate meat that had been used in idol worship as part of a pagan ritual.

If a person who once worshiped God on the required Jewish holy days were to become a Christian, he might well know that Christ saved him through faith, not through his keeping of the law.

Still, when the feast days came, he might feel empty and unfaithful if he didn't dedicate those days to God.

Paul responds to both weak brothers in love. Both are acting according to their consciences, but their honest scruples do not need to be made into rules for the church.

Certainly some issues are central to the faith and worth fighting for—but many are based on individual differences and should not be legislated. Our principle should be: In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in everything, love.

Marriage won't Eliminate Sexual Temptation.

1 Cor. 7:28

But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Many people naively think that marriage will solve all their problems.

Here are some problems marriage won't solve:

- (1) loneliness,
- (2) sexual temptation,
- (3) satisfaction of one's deepest emotional needs,
- (4) elimination of life's difficulties. Marriage alone does not hold two people together, but commitment does—commitment to Christ and to each other despite conflicts and problems.

As wonderful as it is, marriage does not automatically solve every problem. Whether married or single, we must be content with our situation and focus on Christ, not on loved ones, to help address our problems.

People often give into Temptation Gradually.

Rev. 9:20-21

And the rest of the men that were not killed by these plagues yet did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of there fornication, nor of their thefts.

These people were so hardhearted that even plagues did not drive them to God.

People don't usually fall into immorality and evil suddenly—they slip into it a little bit at a time until, hardly realizing what has happened, they are irrevocably mired in their wicked ways. Any person who allows sin to take root in his or her life can find himself or herself in this predicament.

Temptation entertained today becomes sin tomorrow, then a habit the next day, then death and separation from God forever (see James 1:15). To think you could never become this evil is the first step toward a hard heart. Acknowledge your need to confess your sin before God.

If you are facing a temptation today, **simply say NO!**

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from:
Life Application Study Bible. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print