

Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)

B. Temptation takes place when one is potentially drawn away and enticed by one's own evil desire (Jam. 1:13-15).

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

For desire to reach conception stage it needs to be nurtured. Which desires are you nurturing? This is often a visual, mental and verbal activity. It's important to have a biblical alternative. Run to God.

C. Temptation to sin never comes from God (Jam. 1:13).

- God cannot be tempted to sin.
- God does not tempt us to sin.

D. Temptation, in and of itself, is not sin; it is the yielding of our minds and bodies to that temptation that becomes sin (Rom. 6:11-14).

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

1. Eve was tempted by the devil in the garden of Eden and sinned (Gen. 3:1-8).
2. Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness and did not sin (Mt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15)

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

II. What is the nature of temptation?

A. Temptation is common to all mankind and is, therefore, inevitable (1 Cor. 10:13).

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

So, what do you say to the person who says "I can't help it."? Often their minds have been besieged by the enemy.

B. No one, apart from Christ, has a perfect record in overcoming temptation

(Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:23; I John 1:8)

Romans 3:23 - *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*

C. Jesus understands and can identify with us in the area of temptation (Heb 2:17-18).

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Be honest about temptation. If you are to sin, what is it likely to be? Offence, bitterness, violence, greed, fraud, infidelity? It's often the thing you meditate on. Its also often what goes on around you. Your conscience becomes seared in that area.

D. For the believer there is always a way of escape from temptation (I Cor. 10:13).

What is the way of escape for you? Look for it. Jesus used the Word. Jesus said DO GOOD to those who persecute you. These are active things we do. Some people will have their pastors on speed dial and call them when they are in a dangerous situation.

E. When we yield to temptation it always leads to tragic results (Pro. 14:12).

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

NIV - *There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.*

Sin does not always appear evil. It sometimes makes sense to the natural man.

III. How do we overcome temptation?

A. We overcome temptation by first receiving God's salvation in Christ (I John 3:8).

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Christ came to free us from the power of sin. Without His help we cannot succeed.

B. We overcome temptation by recognising that we are weak by nature and that we can indeed fall (Mt. 14:38b; I Cor. 10:12).

I Corinthians 10:12 - *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

When we overestimate our own power over temptation we do not guard ourselves the way that we should. We overestimate our own strength when we:

1. Live too close to the world and function in the "gray" areas of life

(Jam. 1:27; I Th. 5:22).

1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV - *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

- 2. Maintain close relationships with those who encourage us toward sinful behavior (I Cor. 15:33).**

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

- 3. Do not structure our life with personal accountability to others (Eccl. 4:9-12).**

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

- 4. Walk instead of run away from potentially sinful situations (Gen 39:12; 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 2 Tim 2:22).**

1 Corinthians 6:18 - *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.*

- 5. Believe that we can keep the devil contained to our thought life (Ps. 19:14; Pro. 4:23; 22:5).**

Proverbs 4:23 NLT - *Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.*

- 6. Do not maintain the disciplines of prayer and personal Bible reading (Mt. 6:13; Luke 22:40).**

Luke 22:40 - *He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."*

In Mt 26:41 it says "*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*"

- C. We overcome temptation by putting on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:10-17).**

Ephesians 6:11, 16 - *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

- D. We overcome temptation by being rooted in and using God's Word—the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17; Mt. 4:4, 7, 10; Ps. 119:11).**

Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil because He knew the Scripture better than the devil did.

Psalm 119:11 - *Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*

- E. We overcome temptation by understanding the enemy's methods and not being**

ignorant of his tactics (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet 5:8)

2 Corinthians 2:11 - *...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

1 Pet 5:8 - *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

Looking for = searching, inquiring to get to a resolution

F. We overcome temptation by having a strategy to do so (Pro. 21:5).

We cannot be passive when it comes to dealing with these areas of our life. We are to resist the devil (Jam. 4:7b) and take drastic measures to remove his influence in our lives (Mt. 18:9).

James 4:7-8 - *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

G. We overcome temptation by bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

What has become a high thing in your life. Ultimately it will lead to sin. What is the thing you will find most difficult to give up? For some athletes the high thing is winning so they end up sinning by cheating and taking steroids. Their argument is “everyone is doing it.” The same thing is happening today when it comes to fornication. There is always an argument exalting itself above the knowledge of Christ.

H. We overcome temptation by cultivating our love relationship with God and focusing on living a life that pleases Him (Heb. 12:1-2).

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Reflection Questions on next page)

Reflection Questions

1. Read and reflect on each of these quotes on temptation and make your comments.

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is the victory over self. –Aristotle

It is not the great temptations that ruin us; it is the little ones. --John W. DeForest

It is not the mountains that we conquer, but ourselves. --Sir Edmund Hillary

The discipline of desire is the background of character. --John Locke

The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places. --Unknown

2. Develop a personal strategy for overcoming temptation.

Answering the following questions will help you in exploring the tempting situations in your life. Answer these questions focusing on one area at a time.

- What is the nature of the temptation?
- Where are you usually tempted to commit this sin?
- Is there a certain time of the day or week, or certain situations that you are more likely to sin?
- Who are you usually with when you are tempted?
- Why are you tempted in certain areas?
- What steps will you take in your daily life to avoid the tempting situations?
- How will you resist when tempted?