

Dealing With the Problem of Temptation

This evening we will be looking at how we should deal with temptation.

I. Defining Temptation

Gen. 22:1

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am."

In Gen 22:1 the Biblical usage is to 'put to the test'.

God is testing Abraham to see his strength.

Hebrews 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,"

The purpose of this type of testing:

- God is testing us to see what we are really made of.
- God is testing us to produce perseverance.
 - 1) Not just "patience," but stick-to-it-iveness.
 - 2) He doesn't want us to give up. That takes strength.

- God is testing us to develop our character.

He wants us to be mature in our faith and actions.

Matt 5:48 "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

There are a few things that we must be very clear about:

A. God **NEVER** tempts us to do evil, but He does at times allow us to be tempted.

James 1:12-16 is very clear about that.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 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. Do not err, my beloved brethren."

B. Satan is the one that tempts us to sin.

He is called 'the tempter':

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (Mt. 4:3)

"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." (1 Thess. 3:5)

C. God allows us to be tempted, but He also limits the amount of temptation.

Remember the example of Job.

"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." I Cor. 10:13

D. Is temptation sin? NO!

Heb. 4:15

"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."

II. The Pattern of Evil Temptation

In James 1:14-15 we see the Life Cycle of Sin.

1. There is lust and enticement.

This is the beginning stage.

V14 **Every** man – there are no exceptions – is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

“Lust” means to crave something.

“Enticed” means to lure and bait, just like you catch a fish.

This is when you pay too much attention to something that you shouldn’t be looking at.

The more you look at it, the more you start to crave it.

The more you crave it, the easier it is for you to be baited to go after it.

At what point does it become sin?

It is not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin to **dwell** on it and lust after it because that leads to enticement.

2. At the point where you start to lust after it, conception has occurred and it has turned into sin. **V15**

When you see, feel, hear or touch something that is forbidden or harmful -- and fail to turn away from it -
- it has become sin.

In Gen. 3:6, Eve saw, coveted, and took.

The same progression is seen with David in 2Sa. 11:2-4. He saw, coveted, and took Bathsheba.

It can be something as simple as hearing music that has suggestive and immoral words or ideas.

You have got to turn away from it. If you focus on the words, then you have gone to the second stage.

[That is why we have to be careful about the music we hear or the things we see. They can be very powerful.]

When faced with a temptation, the correct thing to do is flee.

When we fail to flee temptation, and instead dwell on it and allow it to become lust, then it becomes sin.

That is also why we need to be careful about the gray areas.

“How far can I go before it is wrong...?”

When we develop a lifestyle near the edge, it doesn’t take Satan a lot to push us over the edge.

How can we overcome temptation?

- If the temptation attacks our thoughts, then we need to push it out of our mind and focus on something that is right.
- If the temptation is attacking one of our other senses (seeing, hearing, touching) then we need to turn our head or body away and flee. Get out of there. Then focus our attention on Christ.

Notice that there always needs to be a replacement.

In our Christian life there are many things that we are supposed to avoid.

If you take something out of your life that is bad, you always need to replace it with something good. Otherwise, you leave a void that will eventually need to be filled.

Example: Person gets saved and gives up wrong music....

3. There is the result of lust and enticement: death.

When Adam sinned, he brought death into the world.

“Wherefore as by one man sinned entered into the world, and death by sin...” Rom 5:8

Sin always brings some sort of death and destruction.

- It kills our sensitivity to the things of God.
- It kills our spiritual joy.
- It kills relationships.

Sin always destroys.

In David’s case we see:

Death - of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah

Death - of the child born out of that adulterous union.

David had to carry the scars of his sin for the rest of his life.

III. The Purpose of Testing

A. Trials are designed to strengthen our faith.

I Peter 1:6-7, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

1. Abraham is a good example of this.
2. Job is another good example.

B. Trials are designed to assist our Christian growth.

James 1:3-4, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

1. Enduring trials results in patience.
2. Patience perfects Christian character.
3. Rom. 5:3, "tribulation worketh patience."

C. Trials make us more like Christ.

1. Just as the husbandman prunes the branches of the vine that they may bear more fruit,
2. So the Father allows us to be tempted to purge away things in our life that hinder our spiritual growth, and to make us more like Christ.

IV. Deliverance From Evil Temptation

Remember God does not tempt us to do evil, but He sometimes allows Satan to.

However, God does limit the extent of the evil temptation.

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

1. Sometimes by sovereign intervention

Ps. 121:7, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil..."

Mt. 6:13, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..."

2. But usually by spiritual provision.

The Word of God is the rule which guides our conduct.

The spiritual provision is offered to us through the Scriptures.

Eph. 6:11-18 exhorts us to be armed against the tempter - Satan.

I Thess. 5:6 exhorts us to be watchful.

Mt. 26:41 exhorts us to be prayerful.

WE KNOW:

A. What temptation is.

B. How temptation comes.

C. Why temptation comes.

D. How God delivers from evil temptation.

E. There is no excuse for falling for the tempter's snares and traps!