

DEALING WITH TEMPTATION

By Pastor Mike Murrell

(from the book Let's Get Started)

There is a misconception that often is given to many Christians. It is a very dangerous misconception, especially in the lives of young Christians. It is a concept that discourages many young Christians and causes them to give up. For that reason, we deal with this issue in this chapter. The concept is "being tempted is sin". Therefore, when the young Christian faces the inevitable time of onslaught of temptation, they feel they are a dirty defeated person without hope of ever fitting up to the standard. Let's look at the Scripture and learn the truth.

James 1:2-3 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience." If temptation is sin, then James is saying count it all joy when you fall into many sins. That is silly!

Jesus was tempted. Hebrews 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." Did you get it? Jesus was tempted in all the same ways as you are tempted, yet He had no sin. Being tempted is not sin. It is the way you respond to temptation that makes it sin. James 1:15 "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin..."

There are many different types of temptation. We can be tempted by things we should not have Genesis 3:6, by things that look pleasant to the eye but yet are corrupt Genesis 25:29-33, by wealth and riches Joshua 7:21, by the opposite gender I Kings 11:1-4, and by power and position Mark 10:35-37. These are only a few sources of temptation listed in the Bible.

When Satan attempted to tempt Christ in Matthew 4, he used hunger or desire to fulfill physical needs in verse 2 to 3, a desire to prove who He was or pride verses 5 to 6, and power and position verses 8 to 9. Notice how Jesus responded; with Scripture.

Temptation will not flourish in your life if you are well versed in the Bible and follow its words. Psalm 119:11 "They word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." Jesus knew Satan had no weapon to battle against the word of God. He did not try to use psychology or a message on learning to cope. He fought and defeated the temptation immediately with the Word of God.

Although temptation in and of itself is not sin, temptation is from the devil. James 1:13-15 "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 has conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” God does not tempt you. God does sometimes put you through and allow you to go through trials to strengthen you. However, He never comes to you and says why don’t you sin, just so He can tempt you. Because temptation is the devil’s job, it should always be avoided and stopped immediately by the Christian. Genesis 3:1, I Chronicles 21:1, Matthew 4:3, II Corinthians 11:3, I Thessalonians 3:5.

Satan is the one that comes in and tells you “go ahead and do it. God will not really punish you. He is a loving God. You won’t die.” It is Satan who brings this attitude of questioning into your mind. Do not believe him. He is a liar. He is the tempter.

In the verses we quoted earlier James 1:13-15, we are tempted when we are drawn away by our own lusts and enticed. Satan knows where your weak spots are. He will draw you away with your lusts. You need to resist his efforts so your temptation does not conceive sin. Temptation is not sin, but when the temptation “carries you away,” it is sin.

Some will quote the verse that Jesus stated in Matthew 5:27-28 saying “ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” They will say “doesn’t that show that to be tempted is to commit the act already?”

The Greek word for lust is *epithumeo* used in its verb form in this verse. It indicates a strong desire. This is not denoting an attitude of thinking someone is beautiful or desirable. It is denoting an attitude of active lusting after that person. Therefore, the temptation itself is not the act of sin. It is the allowing of the temptation to take root in your thought life and in the way you look at someone or something with a coveting attitude that makes it sin.

Proverbs 1:10 “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Proverbs 4:14 “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.” II Peter 3:17 “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”

You number one rule in your Christian walk should be to not walk in the paths of sinners. Light has no fellowship with darkness. You need to walk with Jesus, in His light. Do not put yourself in circumstances that will encourage you to fall. If you allow yourself to be enticed, then Satan will bring you into sin. If you are an alcoholic, do not frequent the bars. If you have a problem with lust, don’t be looking at things that encourage the lust to take root in your thoughts. Use your common sense and avoid the devil.

II Corinthians 2:11 “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” We do not have to sit by and allow our lives to be hammered with temptation. When Jesus was tempted, He responded quickly and decisively and ended the argument. When Satan attacks with temptation, attack back with the word of God and the power of prayer. You can win.

Romans 6:13 “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” Act like you are alive from the dead. As Paul stated in Galatians 2:18 “For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” When we submit to temptation, we are taking back on the bondage that once held us down. We must remind Satan we are free from that. When the Son sets us free, we are free indeed John 8:36.

Ephesians 6:13 “Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” We must stand against the devil and to do that, we must have the armor of God. We should not wait for the temptation to come before we prepare for it. Notice Jesus never hesitated with His answers. He was already prepared for the attack from Satan. When Satan attacked, Jesus met him head on because Jesus was clothed in the armor. We must be ready for the battle before the battle comes. When you are under the duress of being tempted, that is not time to be searching through the Bible for a word. You need to have His Word in your heart, so you can respond, without delay.

You might think Jesus won against the temptation because He was God. Do not deceive yourself. Jesus was just as hungry as you would have been if you spent forty days without food. The temptation was the same, the ability to fall was the same, and the verses He used are the same verses that are available to you to battle with.

Take comfort when you are tempted. God understands! Hebrews 2:18 “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor (sustain, comfort) them that are tempted.” II Peter 2:9 “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptation and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.” Do not dwell on the temptation, dwell on God. He knows how to deliver you and He will if you will keep your eyes on Him and not on the temptation. I Corinthians 10:13 “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.” All temptation is common. It does not shock God. He draws the line and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle. That means if we fall, we fall because we want to and not because we have to.

Most of the time, we fall when we do not put a stop to the tempting thoughts immediately. Jesus did not stand and dwell on the temptation. He could have thought, "You know, I am hungry. After all, I made these rocks. It would not hurt a thing for me to turn one of them into bread. No one would even know and some bread would taste really good right now. After all, I have a right. I am Jesus."

The devil will whisper just such an argument with you. "It really isn't as bad as you think. What will it really hurt? Just think how good it will feel and no one needs to know. It will be our little secret." Jesus did not allow any of those thoughts. He stopped the thoughts the devil was trying to place in Him and did not allow them to take root.

When we overcome temptation, God strengthens us and blesses us. Notice in Matthew 4:11 after Jesus had overcome temptation, "Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold angels came and ministered unto Him." Praise the Lord! Not only does God draw the line on how far Satan can go, He also strengthens you after the battle. The Holy Spirit will come and breathe new life into your spirit and give you renewed peace and joy. He is an awesome God! James 1:12 "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." You can endure and you can overcome.

Now that we have shown you the facts on resisting, we will close this chapter with the other side of the coin. All of us have experienced what it is like to fall to temptation. Sometimes the devil does catch us in a weak moment and we fall. Are we without hope when this happens?

Some of the greatest people in the Bible have experienced those times of falling. Peter, David, Samson, Noah, Moses, and many many more knew what it was like to feel the loss of falling to temptation. When you experience the fall, the devil will push you into the depths of guilt.

The devil will do everything in his power to hide I John 2:1 from you. Take this verse and mark it in your memory. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It is never God's will that we sin and we should never allow ourselves to continue in sin. He will never accept sin. However, when we do sin, Jesus Christ is our lawyer. He defends us in the courts of Heaven.

Stand against temptation with all you have. Do not give in to it. If you fall, come to the Lord and ask His forgiveness and go and sin no more. God will make you and overcome and next time you will be stronger than ever. You can do it. Start standing now against the temptations of the enemy. The more you resist him, the more spiritual muscle you develop.

Your armor will become battle tested armor and you will withstand any temptation that Satan throws your way.