

OVERCOMING SOLICITATIONS OF THE HEART – James 1:9-18

As with trials, temptation is something we will all experience; however, they are different. Theologian J.D. Pentecost describes the difference. *“What is temptation? Seduction to evil, solicitation to wrong. It stands distinguished from trial thus: trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; but temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin. The one means to undeceive, the other to deceive. The one aims at the man's good, making him conscious of his true moral self; but the other at his evil, leading him more or less unconsciously into sin. God tries; Satan tempts.”* Fairbain, quoted in *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, J.D. Pentecost, p. 99. Thus, Jesus taught us to pray: *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”* (Matthew 6:13a)

Notice in (read: v.9-11) God allows trials in our lives, *whether rich or poor*, for the necessary development of His Son's character within us (v.1-8).

Temptation, however, is to be avoided altogether. As the saying goes, *“You can't keep the birds (temptation) from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair!”* Today we will look the **antidote, source, nature, and remedy related to temptation.**

ANTIDOTE – (v.12) **Love for Christ**, is our antidote *against* temptation; without it, we cannot endure it. Paul declares in **2 Timothy 3:4**, in the last days men will be *“lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God”*; because immediate gratification requires **no** endurance! However, **true** blessedness (happiness) is found in the man/woman who endures, *living a life free of ruin and regret*, which often accompanies carnal gratification. **They are “qualified” (approved), to wear the “crown of life!”**

This **crown**, Paul mentions here, is **not** salvation, but that of **divine vitality**, which accompanies **obedient endurance** in Christ! **It is “life more abundantly!”** **David said: (ttt) Psalm 32:1-5.** Unconfessed sin, which sets love for **pleasure** over love for God's **presence**, will *rob* us of spiritual vitality. Repentance, *however*, restores our divine vitality in Christ! David said: (*Psalm*

32:5) *I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.* When we return to our first love, everything changes; the drought becomes a torrent of vitality, living water! (John 7:37-38) "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." We must answer the same question Jesus asked Peter, in John 21:15, after Peter's betrayal: "***Do you love Me more than these?***" It is not the strength of the temptation, but the weakness of our love for Jesus, that grants temptation power over us!

SOURCE – (v.13, 14) The *ally* of temptation is "**You and me!**" The old excuse offered by the late comedian Flip Wilson, is not *valid* in God's book: "***The devil made me do it!***" (1 Peter 5:8) ***Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*** Satan has no more power over you than that which you give him! Because "*greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world!*" **God tempts no man;** because temptation is evil (v.13b). We are "**drawn away**" – literally: to entice, dragged away, by our desires. The Greek word for "***desire***" – ***epithumia: forbidden longing.***

To deal with temptation *effectively*, we must *first* deal with the avenues within us, for temptation: ***our flesh, our eyes, and our pride!*** (1 John 2:15-17) ***Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*** Repentance and aligning our hearts with God's will, frees us from the undertow, the alluring enticement of temptation!

Temptation is not only of the sexual nature, but it is any propensity we have to violate God's word, *in trial, affliction, persecution, or prosperity*. ***When we yield to temptation we are, in fact, practicing idolatry!*** (1 Corinthians 10:12-15) ***Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 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. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. Victory begins when we stop blaming others, or our situation, and honestly own up to our part! David/Bathsheba: (Psalm 51:4a) "Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight..."

NATURE – (v.15-18) Temptation's nature is that of its originator, the devil: to *kill, steal, and destroy!* **Desires** (forbidden longings), like seeds, will *eventually* break through the soil of hypocrisy, and come to fruition, promising life, but **only** producing **death!** *Many Hollywood moguls, A-list actors, executives, and leaders are now experiencing the reality of God's word. Pastor John Piper writes: "Sin (lust for example) gets its power by persuading me to believe that I will be more happy if I follow it. The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier."* E. Lutzer, Putting Your Past Behind You, Here's Life, 1990, p.54.

By nature, sin *also* cuts off communication, and communion, with God. (Psalm 66:18-20) **If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, Nor His mercy from me! Do not be deceived! (read: v.17, 18); God only gives "good and perfect gifts" (that which benefits our growth in Christ).** I've seen believers leave their spouses for another lover, and declare, *"The Lord and I have never been closer!"* But God is **not** mocked, you will surely receive what you have planted! (Galatians 6:8) **For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**

REMEDY – (Genesis 4:6-7) So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Here are **four** ways we can **rule** rather than be **ruined** by temptation: (1) Word. When our Lord was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, **Matthew 4:1-11**, He did not match wits, reason, or debate with the devil, but simply declared, "It is written!" Never resist temptation on the devil's terms! (2) Submission. (James 4:7) (3) Flee. (2 Timothy 2:22) **Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.** (Genesis 39) Joseph/Potiphar's wife – she grabbed his garment, he left it behind; sometimes in order to flee

you have to leave something behind! It's been said: ***"When you flee temptation be sure you don't leave a forwarding address."*** Paul exhorted Timothy: *pursue, righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart; follow godly examples!*

(4) Reward. *Am I living for eternal or temporal rewards?* "Complete the scenario." Temptation succeeds when we lose sight of the reward! **(Hebrews 11:24-26) By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.**

CONCLUSION: **If you've fallen, remember God stands ready to forgive and not condemn!** **(Psalm 86:5) For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.**