

"GOD I'M TEMPTED"

Temptation has been defined as "an effort to try to persuade, induce, entice especially to something sensually pleasurable or immoral." It means "to arouse a desire." Basically, temptation is that inner voice that says "go ahead and do it" when you know you should not.

Like a story been told of a man hunted in vain for a parking space and in desperation left his car in a no parking zone with a note on the windshield: "I've circled this block ten times and I have an appointment to keep or lose my job. Forgive us our trespasses."

A police officer who read the note left this reply: "I've circled this block for twenty years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation."

In order to gain some insight into defeating temptation, lets look at the experience of the only three perfect people who ever lived on earth. All three faced temptations. Two gave in and lost their perfection. Only one was able to successfully defeat it. From the experiences of these three, we learn important lessons in how to overcome.

As we study God's Word we see an illustration of temptation early in the Scriptures. Adam and Eve were given everything they could desire (Gen.--3.:.1-6) :The only restriction was--not-to eat, of one tree. Satan' came to Eve disguised as a snake and said, "Go ahead, eat-it. It won't.-hurt-anything. God was --selfish when - He told you not to eat."

The crux of the temptation was not the fruit Eve ate, but the *command of God*. It was an attempt to get Eve to do what God said she should not do. She knew it was contrary to what God had commanded, but was persuaded to "go ahead anyway." The essence of any temptation is to get us to do what God has commanded we should not do.

It would be a misconception to say that temptations are ugly. On the contrary they are usually most appealing. Eve found this to be so as she looked at the fruit of the tree and saw it was "good for food." Nothing wrong with food value! Probably had plenty of every essential vitamins! Eve also saw it was a "delight to the eyes" and was "to be desired to make one wise." It represented a short cut to wisdom.

When Eve looked at the fruit, it seemed foolish to bypass it just because God said to leave it alone. Anything so appealing couldn't be that bad! Perhaps God was just being unreasonable about the whole matter. Everything she heard and saw from the serpent provided her with the necessary rationalization to go contrary to the specific command of God.

While temptation appears attractive and provides the necessary rationale to do it, the thing it doesn't do is reveal the danger involved. Since the time of Eve, the first human failure falling prey to temptation and persuaded Adam to eat the fruit, human life has been filled with daily temptations. Unfortunately, our temptations are usually more than a desire to eat an extra potato chip! They strike three basic areas of life: physical, psychological and religious.

The best way to see each of these is to look at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. (Matt. 4:3-4)

The first temptation Jesus faced was physical. He was hungry and Satan suggested He use His power to turn stones to bread and eat. "Use your power to satisfy your Physical need for food," said Satan. "Why be hungry when you have the power to do something."

And because we have become people attached to our creature comforts, we seem to go into the same traps. We are, tempted to use our last dollar to get a gadget that will make us more comfortable. The tempter says "Go ahead and get.. it. It will make life easier for you. God isn't interested in your material needs, so look out for "yourself To the youth. he whispers.." Go ahead enjoy sex before marriage. It's all right as long as you love each other. Physically the temptation is: "Why deny yourself things you want? Use everything and anything to satisfy your personal desires."

The second temptation was psychological. (Matt. 4:5-7) Satan urged Jesus to throw Himself from the temple in order to make a dramatic show before the crowds below. What a scene it would have made! Everyone would have been astounded when Jesus landed unhurt.

Satan also tempts us to take premature steps in order to make ourselves look great. "Don't wait for God to promote you. He prefers you to be a nobody'. have you ever had the urge to see(recognition by doing something spectacular? If so, you've experienced psychological temptation.

We also have religious temptation. (Matt. 4:8-10) In Jesus' third temptation, Satan urged Him to make a "little" compromise so He could be a world ruler. "All you have to do is to fall down and worship me," suggested the tempter. "That's a small price for such a rich reward." The real issue here, of course, is who is going to be Lord of our lives. Satan says if we let him run the show, he'll pay handsome dividends. He says it's all right to bend the rules in order to get more for yourself. Compromise of your standards is the name of the game. If you ever had the urge to hide your scruples in order to make a better deal, then you've had a religious temptation!

Satan chips away at little things in our lives and seeks to destroy our foundation by getting us to do things that seem insignificant. He bombards us with an inner voice which says, "Go ahead and do it. it really isn't all that bad. Its just a little white lie."

It s not easy to defeat the bombardment of temptation, because it comes in so many disguises. But God gives us a formula -to help defeat it.

First: Recognize temptation for what it is. Temptations do not come floating through the ventilating system they have a tempter behind them! In Eden, the tempter came as a snake and queried, "Indeed .:has God said?:" In our Lord's temptation, we read He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be "tempted, of the devil." The "tempter" is identified as the devil and he, not God, is responsible for every temptation. God does not tempt us.

Since temptations come from the devil, it is also incorrect to say that temptations come in order to strengthen our character. Though strengthening of character may result from withstanding temptations, that is not their purpose! The devil is not interested in strengthening our character. His aim is to cause the failure and destruction of our character.

The Greek verb "PEIRAZO" which is translated "tempted" means "to discover good or evil." It is his intent to discover weakness and defeat.

Because Satan wants to see failure, he strikes at our most vulnerable point. He repeatedly concentrates his efforts on our weakness until fellowship with God and harmony with ourselves is broken.

Wake up to the fact that temptations come from Satan, and he is not out for fun and games. He plays for keeps! Therefore the first step in defeating Satan and temptation is to recognize it for what it is an attempt by Satan to get you to rebel against God.

Second: Realize God has given us the power to resist temptation. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it".(I Cor. 10:13)

Notice the verse says that no temptation is unique. Every temptation we face has been faced by others. As long as we think we are facing a unique problem, we're on the road to giving in and suffering defeat. Cheer Up! Others have defeated your temptations, so can you!

Another delightful truth in this verse is that God will never permit any temptation too great for us. When Satan tempts us, he's operating under God's permissive will. God has laid the ground rules and Satan can go only so far. This was the case with Job.

J. B. Phillips translate this portion, "But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance ---."

God knows exactly how much pressure we can bear.

A third truth revealed in this verse is that God gives us strength to defeat any particular temptation. With "a way to escape." This doesn't mean God halts the temptation. Rather it means God makes it possible for us to break temptation's power. He does this so we can endure the temptation without failure.

When temptation ways heavy, understand that God is vitally concerned and has provided you with the power to defeat your temptation. The power is available, but you must want to resist temptation in order to use the power that God makes available.

Third: Use the Word of God.

When Jesus was pressed by Satan, He repeatedly turned to the Word of God. Each time Satan came with a suggestion, Jesus said, "It stands written," and then quoted what God had said. What we see here is mind of God and the mind of Satan in conflict. When tempted, Jesus turned and quoted the mind of God in each matter. After Jesus used the Word of God three times in His defense, we read, "Then the devil left Him----." The word of God was used to defeat the suggestions of the devil.

While God Himself provides us with the external protection by limiting Satan's power, He also provides us with the tool for defeating him -- His Word. The Psalmist cried, "Thy Word have I treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." Psalms 119:11)

The Word of God should be our standard of reference in all matters. When any suggestion goes contrary to the mind of God we should tell Satan what God has said about the matter. Never make the mistake of trying to reason with Satan. You may be smart, but no one is smart enough to outwit him. Allow God's Word to defeat him!

A word of practical exhortation: If you hope to use the word as a-defense against the subtle suggestions of the devil, it will require two things. **First**, you must invest time in learning what the Word of God says. **Second**, after spending time learning the mind of God, be willing to obey His Word! Its useless to know what God says unless you have a willingness to put it into action when temptation comes. When you do obey, God will bring His word to your mind and you will experience victory. Peace. However, when you choose not to obey, you will go down in spiritual defeat.

Ever since Adam and Eve, Satan has enticed man to go contrary to God. Because he frequently disguises himself as an angel of light. (II Cor. 11:14)

Satan often tricks people into following him because they believe he has been authorized by God. Do not be taken in by that lie!hat current temptation you may be facing, but God's promise is you can defeat

Feel down, gloomy, dejected and worthless? Try them and see.

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