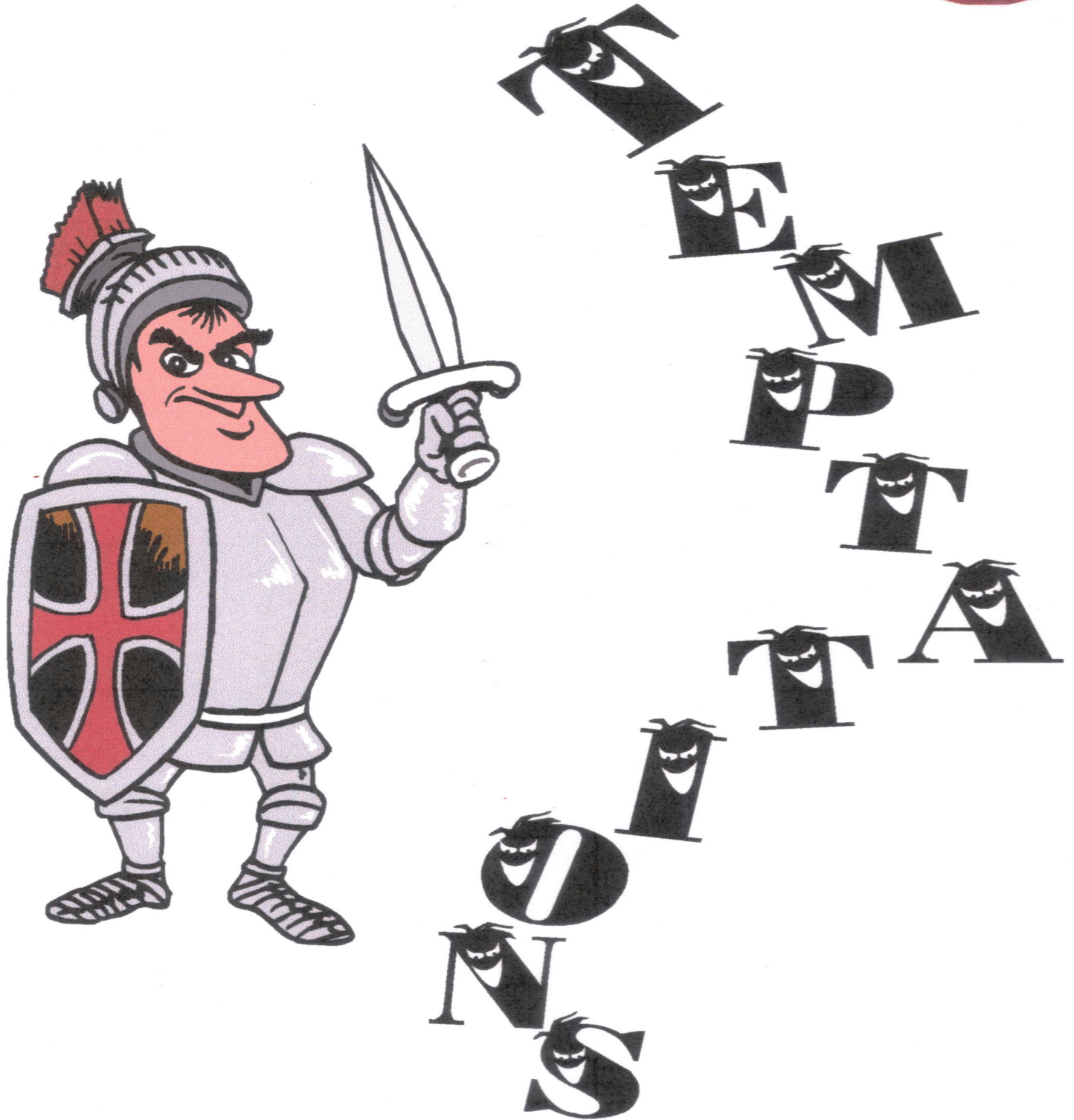


# Battling



A Workbook by Daniel R. Vess



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## Objective of this Series:

- To show what temptation is.
- To identify the sources of temptation.
- To discover the Tempter and his testing tools.
- Show the divine purpose of testing.
- To show how to overcome and battle temptation.
- To understand what Divine assistance is available in temptation.
- Look forward to the rewards of overcoming temptation.
- Identify those who yielded and those who triumphed at the testing tree.

## Identifying the Battlefield

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"What do you do when you are tempted?" The question was directed to no one in particular, but an overweight young woman answered laughing, "When I meet temptation, I eat it!" The group joined in laughter. Then a serious young fellow of about thirty said without a smile, "What do I do when I'm tempted? I'll tell you what I do. I yield!" Again the others laughed, this time with surprise. But I knew that the young man had not intended to be funny; he was hurting, and he was groping for the answer to his personal failure.

Temptation is a universal experience. Since the time of Adam and Eve men have struggled with temptation. It is common to all men and women everywhere. To the Tibetan monk who lives in the Himalayan mountains of Tibet to the businessman in New York to the farmer in Iowa.

Before learning how to deal with temptation we have to have a Biblical definition of with what we are dealing. Thus, this first lesson will investigate the meaning of "temptation".

### Temptation is....That Which Tests Or Tries A Person Or Thing

Two common Hebrew words for temptation are "bachan" and "nissah". They refer to putting someone or something to the test. When David was given King Saul's armor he said, "*I have not tested [tempted] them*" (I Sam. 17:29). He would not risk his life using weapons he never tried. The Hebrews compared God's testing of man with hard questions (I Kings 10:1). The Queen of Sheba tested Solomon's renowned wisdom. She made trial of his wisdom to see if it was exaggerated. When Daniel and his friends were urged to eat the king's dainties they refused. "*Tempt us with pottage and water ten days*", said Daniel, and see whether or not we are healthier than the other young men (Dan. 1:12,14). Thus, referring to a test of between two different diets.

Likewise, the Greek word "peirazo" also refers to putting someone or something to the test. Vine defines the verb to mean "*to test, try, prove, in a good sense, said of Christ and of believers.*" (p. 1128). The idea of putting something or someone to the test in order to assess real value, endurance or strength. Peirazo is what they do in at NASA when they put the newly developed piece of space equipment through trials to detect flaws in its design or workmanship. If the test, trials or temptations were severe the Greeks used the word "ekpeirazo".

Testing through trials is a necessary part of life. No matter how good a product is rated on paper its not good till its tried. Some things come with 30 day trial periods, if you find that it does not meet up with the test of usage you may return it for your money back. Time trials come before Olympic races or the Daytona 500.

Life itself is a test. Civilization has always advanced when it has been put to the test by challenge. Some of our greatest advancements have been in times of epidemics, economic depression and wars. We consider product testing to be essential to the improvement of our technology. The academic community thrives on it. Doctors must pass test before they are licensed to practice medicine. Testing is for the betterment of our quality of life both physical, social, mentally, and especially spiritually.

We must understand that the primary meaning of temptation is to prove or test as in the case of Abraham. "*Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham...*" (Gen. 22:1).

### Temptation Means...To Entice Or Induce A Person To Sin

The secondary meaning of temptation is to entice as used in Js. 1:13. "*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'*" (James 1:13). Thayer defines this usage of the word to mean: "to try or test one's faith, virtue, character, by enticement to sin; ...to solicit to sin, to tempt; of the temptations of the devil" (p. 498).

Thus, the biblical idea of temptation is not primarily of seduction, as in modern usage, but of making trial of a person or putting him to the test. It is only since the 17th century that the word's connotation has been limited to testing with evil intent. On the one hand, temptation indicates a testing which aims at spiritual good. On the other hand temptation signifies any attempt to entice into evil.

### Uses Of The Word "Temptation"

1) "*Temptation*" is used in reference putting other men to the test. We are to test those who say they are apostles (Rev. 2:2). Still others tempt to trap one in sin. They are playing the devil's advocate. As one lady said

giving her confession to the church: *"I was very foolish and vain. Worldly pleasure, and especially the fashions, were my only thought. I was fond of silks, satins, jewelry, ribbons, and laces. But, my friends, when I found that they were dragging me down to perdition I gave them all to my sister."* A prime example of this is the many times the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus into self-incriminating assertions (Matt. 16:1; 19:3; 22:18).

2) Testing of oneself is another usage of this term. As a matter of fact we are commanded to test ourselves to see whether we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5) We are to test ourselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28).

3) As odd as it may seem men can put God to the test. It is true, God cannot be tempted. This is referring to inducement or enticement into evil. However, men are said to tempt God by *"exhibitions of distrust, as though they wished to try whether He is not justly distrusted; by impious or wicked conduct to test God's justice and patience, and to challenge Him, as it were, to give proof of his perfections."* (Thayer, p. 498). Vine says, *"of trying of challenging God, Ac. 15:11; 1 Cor. 10:9; Heb. 3:9"*. (p. 1128). God is tested by behavior which constitutes a insolent provocation of Him to prove the truth of His words and the goodness and justice of His ways (Ex. 17:2,7; Num. 14:2; Dt. 6:16). Thus to goad God betrays extreme irreverence which God Himself forbids it. *"Jesus said to him [Satan], 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God"'"* (Matt. 4:7; cf. 1 Cor. 10:9f). This form of temptation involves doubting, rebelling against, grieving, forgetting, disobeying, disbelieving, ignoring, hardening, the heart against, and speaking against the ways of God, being - ignorant of God's ways following evil cravings and being deceived by sin (Heb. 3:7-19). Faith does not question God's worth or word. Calling upon God to prove Himself on our terms, to our satisfaction, is the direct antithesis of faith. Tests refine or improve. God cannot be improved. Tests detect flaws. God is perfect thus to test Him is to deny that He is Holy. Thus, to test God is an affront to His Deity, to put Him on trial is an affront to the Judge of all, and to tempt Him who is too holy to sin is an exercise in futility.

4) God on the other hand can and does put man to the test. Again it is true that James 1:14 says that God does not tempt any man. *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed"*. This is true. He never entices us to commit sin. Yet, He puts us to the test to reveal the quality of our faith and loyalty to Him, to improve our patience, strength, and humility, and to purify our souls. This is the way in which God tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1) and Israel (Dt. 8:2,3). God allows us to be tempted to give us an occasion for the exercise of free will. To make the right choice and thereby grow more like Him. Satan uses it as an occasion for us to sin. Ultimately, God Himself allows all temptation permitting Satan to try to reduce us for beneficent purposes.

5) Finally, the most commonly understood usage of the term "temptation" applies to Satan enticing man to sin. Satan wants to manipulate us within the limits that God permits Him, in an attempt to make us desert God's Will. He will use anything that will induce or entice a person to sin (Js. 1:12-14) Even as Satan tried to tempt the Son of Man to commit sin (Mt. 6:13).

## Common Misconceptions About Temptation

- Temptation Is Sin

Some think that being tempted is sin itself. Christ was tempted in all points as we are yet He was without sin. *"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"* (Heb. 4:15). If God expected us to be able to control what came into our minds, why would He move the apostle Paul to instruct believers to take "every thought captive"? (2 Cor. 10:5). Our environment determines to a great extent what comes into our minds, visually and audibly. What other people wear, say and do may present temptations to our minds. If temptation is sin then we would have to be able to control another's conduct, speech and dress in order not to sin. We cannot control what other people wear or say.

God gave us an appetite to react to certain foods. Whether or not people are on a diet has nothing to do with how their taste buds react. The brownie serves an external stimuli that causes an internal reaction. The same is true for sexual temptation, the temptation to lie, the temptation to gossip, and even the temptation to be lazy. He knows Satan is working full time to flood our ears, eyes, and minds with things that will sidetrack us. Temptation becomes sin only when and as the suggestion of evil is accepted and yielded to.

- Spiritually Mature People Are Not Harassed by Temptation

Somewhere we have we have gotten the erroneous idea that our ultimate goal as Christians is to come to a place in our lives where we are never tempted. *"If you are truly filled with the Holy Spirit, you will be above temptation."* Jesus was certainly filled with the Holy Spirit. yet not even He escaped temptation. If the Son of God never reached the point where He was above being tempted, it is highly unlikely you would ever reach such a point in this lifetime, either.

- Eventually a Christians Can Mature Beyond Temptation

Although sometimes temptations will subside as life progresses or one matures in Christ, there will always

be trials of our faith. *"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:11,12). In verse 13, God has promised to deliver you from giving in to temptation. Nowhere has He promised to deliver you from being tempted.

- We Fall into Temptation

Some have been heard to say, "All of a sudden I fell into temptation." Such phraseology portrays sinners as victims, innocent bystanders who are swept into sin against their will. We do not fall into temptation; we choose to sin. When someone falls into a hole or falls off a bicycle, it is usually not the result of a conscious decision to do so. Temptation is not something we fall into; it is something we choose to give in to. If sin was something we fell into, then Christ would have no right to hold us personally accountable. "I don't know what came over me. I just found myself doing good things. I couldn't help it. I didn't really want to do all those nice things; I just fell into it." We always take personal responsibility for the good things we do, don't we? We want to pass off as unavoidable. But we are responsible for both. Just as we choose to do good, so we choose to do evil.

- God Is Disappointed and Displeased When We Are Tempted

Some feel like a failed child of God simply because they are tempted, as if they continually let the Father down. Certainly He was not disappointed in His own Son when He was tempted. Don't confuse how God feels about your temptations with your own disappointed feelings. The Father uses temptation as one of His primary tools to develop character and faith in believers. *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing."* (James 1:2-4).

The trainer at some point in the training process will tell the dog to stay and then put something the dog loves to eat just a few feet away. A well-trained dog will wait until permission is granted before going over to the food. Setting the food before the dog tests the animal's loyalty to his trainer. *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been appraised, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him"* (James 1:12). James said that God rewards those who are tempted - if they persevere. He knows Satan is out to entice you. He also gave you the power to choose, to say no. There is a sense in which God gave you the potential to be tempted in the first place.

## Conclusion

Remember, if it is leading to or enticing one to sin it is temptation. This is how we will use the term "temptation" throughout this study. The reason that *"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23) is that all accountable people, have yielded to temptation. By "accountable" we mean those who were able to distinguish between right from wrong choices and yet chose to do wrong. We were not born "totally depraved". We were made with the power of choice. Let's recognize the temptations of life and make the Godly choice.

## Questions:

1. What is the primary definition of temptation?
2. What are things which are tested in society?
3. What is the secondary meaning of temptation?
4. In what ways did the Pharisees try to tempt Jesus?
5. In what ways are Christians commanded to test themselves?

6. Can God be tempted by evil?
7. How do men tempt God?
8. Why does God put men to the test?
9. Why does Satan tempt man?
10. Is temptation itself sin? Explain.
11. Did God anywhere promise us freedom from temptation? Explain.
12. Explain why man does not simply fall into temptation.
13. What do temptations produce?
14. What is the main definition that will be used throughout this study?
15. What does it mean to be "*accountable*"?

Application and Discussion:

1. Can a Christian reach the point where he is not tempted? Explain.
2. How should a Christian respond when various temptations come?

Homework: When faced with the choice to disobey God this week meditate on and contrast the desire of the Devil to tempt you to do evil in contrast to the testing of your faith by God.



# The War Begins

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## Genesis 3

Two boys were bragging as they often do. Sam said, "My daddy has sword of Washington and a hat of Lincoln". Bill countered with: "My father has an Adam's apple." A comedian has said "the only things Adam would recognize if he came back to earth are the bad jokes". However, the following is no joke. Several leading scientists were asked whether the forbidden fruit of Genesis chapters two and three was really an apple or not, since apples do not generally grow in the part of the middle east where it is believed the Garden of Eden was located. A couple of these so-called experts even said that we would probably have to check the Hebrew and Greek translations of the Bible to see exactly what was meant by the word "apple" to be absolutely sure. Yet, the Bible does not even claim that Adam and Eve ate an apple. It just calls it a "fruit." (My wife who does not like banana's says that it must have been the forbidden fruit]. The type of fruit does not matter, the fact that God said do not eat it does matter and what Adam and Eve did has mattered ever since.

## Trouble In Paradise

God from the beginning gave wonderful things to man. Every good thing was created and available for Adam and Eve.

☞ God Gave Man a Garden Paradise

He made the world and it was all good (Gen. 1:31) Next, a garden was created for man (Gen. 2:8). The garden into which God put the newly-formed couple did not cover all the land of Eden. Eden was a district and God planted a garden eastward in Eden.

☞ God Gave Man a Woman

Man was alone. This was not good. So, God who is love did what was best for man and created a help meet for man's needs. Great care is seen in providing woman. Adam was told to check all of creation for a companion. When none was found He created woman, not from the dust of the earth, but from the rib in Adam's side.

☞ God Gave Man a Job

Not only was it not good for man to be alone, it was not good for man to be idle. God gave man a job to do (Pr. 24:34). As they say, "*An idle mind is the devil's workshop and idle hands are the devil's tools*" (see Eph. 4:28). They worked, yes; but work brought no fatigue, for they could eat of the tree of life which perpetuated the newness of youth in undiminished strength.

☞ God Gave Man a Duty

Two responsibilities were placed upon Adam and Eve in the garden. They were to be fruitful and multiply. Someone has well said that this is the only command that God ever Second, they were to tend the garden. The oldest profession is gardening.

☞ God Gave Man a Restraint

Imagine living in Eden, an oasis of love, beauty, companionship, and enjoyment. No clothes to wash. No bills to pay. They could work in the garden without the panic brought on by weeds and drought. Think of a drug free world with no violence. Did they pinch themselves to see if they were dreaming? It was the perfect vacation spot. Guilt, shame, and blame ended the vacation. There is a difference between temptation in Eden and temptation now. They had a quiet, tranquil existence. Their only duty was to tend to the garden. Their only temptation and restriction was the fruit on one tree.

## The Testing Tree

☞ A Dietary Restriction

God gave them only one law of restraint. He tells man not to taste of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of knowledge was forbidden (2:16,17). It was labeled "unfit for human consumption."

☞ Side Effects of Eating the Forbidden Fruit

God gave man a punishment for breaking His commandment. This served to deter Adam and Eve from violating God's Law. Law without punishment is, in fact, no law (Eccl. 8:11). One of the major problems with the laws

of our nation is that punishment is not sure and swift.

#### ☛ Motive Behind the Warning Label

God placed both the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in this Garden (v. 9). Like all the other trees these were good and beautiful and designed for the benefit of man. The tree could have been an everlasting symbol of man's obedience to God. The tree from God's point of view was an encouragement to good, and not evil. Ever since man has had testing trees in the forest of life. Man will either yield or triumph at the testing trees.

## The Fake Fruit Inspector

#### ☛ The Satiric Form He Took

Satan was using God's creation: The serpent and the tree. He took God's creation which was good. The Devil misused it and it became useless. He was crafty - "*more subtle*." The camouflaged, sinuous movement of the serpent made it symbolically suitable as a medium for the wiles of the devil. He appeared as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14), offering to lead Eve to the true interpretation of God's commandment.

#### ☛ He Described God as Unfaithful and Selfish

He is the slanderer or accuser. In verse five he accuses God by asking Eve, "Has God been holding out on you?" Satan tried to cast doubt as to whether God had her best interest at heart or was just holding out on man by holding him back from the tree. He charged God with unfaithfulness; he virtually charged that God was holding them in ignorance through selfishness. It hints at something strange, if not unjust or unkind, on the part of God. Why was any tree withheld? God, despite His liberality, had restricted their freedom. Eating the fruit in question would make them as God, "*knowing good and evil*." Satan re-interpreted God as a devil, a liar possessed by jealous pride.

#### ☛ He Called God a Liar

Jesus said the Devil was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). That the devil here told the truth, in part, is attested by the fact that God later said, "*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*" (3:22). And their eyes were opened (3:7). Since the lie was cast in the realm of the future, Eve had to decide between God or Satan on faith. Notice how lies are always more convincing if supported by half truths. Satan did not remind her of the truth that we find in Proverbs 9:10: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding*."

#### ☛ He Used Deception

His very name implies deception. He is the deceiving one. The devil deceived her by making her believe that this would be the only consequence. Satan led them to believe that they were capable of deciding what was best for themselves (Rom. 5:12). He made his temptation sound so enticing and look so attractive that Eve was readily enticed into taking something that was expressly forbidden by God. Don't be deceived like Eve (2 Cor. 11:3). "*Do not be deceived*" (Gal. 6:7). Although, Eve was deceived; Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). She thought she was doing what is right. Adam knew he was doing what was wrong.

## The Tempting, Tasting Fruit

#### ☛ The Desire to Be like God

Satan appealed to the fruit's enchanting appearance, appetizing aspects, and as Eve's "ticket to godhood." With all that going for it, she must have thought, what possible harm could there be in eating it? Yet, appearance can be as deceiving as chocolate covered jalapenos. Adam and Eve knew good in the garden, but they did not have experiential knowledge of evil. They did not know it experientially, that is, by having done it. Just how does God know evil?

God knows evil, not by experiencing because He cannot experience evil, but by relating it to Himself. That which is consistent with His character and His nature is good; that which is inconsistent with it is evil. That which is out of line, out of character with Himself is evil, destructive, and dangerous; but all that is in line with His own nature is good. That is how God "knows" good and evil. He relates it to Himself. ...God is the only Being in all the universe who has the right to really all things to Himself. when a creature tries it he gets into trouble. The creatures of God's universe are made to discover the difference between good and evil by relating all to the being of God, not to themselves. When man began to think of himself as the center of the universe, he became like God. But it was all a lie. Man is not the center of the universe, and he cannot be (Ray Stedman, Understanding Man).

#### ☛ Tools of Deception

Eve didn't get up one morning with the idea, "I think I'll break God's law today." No! Satan had to deceive

her with his bag of tricks. John has listed these for us: *"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."* (1 John 2:15-17).

Eve was appealed to the tree through the lust of the flesh: *"The woman saw the tree was good for food"*. As Satan tempted Jesus trying to get him to turn stone to bread (Mt. 4:3). Today, he uses hedonism.

Next, she was lured to the tree through the lust of the eyes *"and that it was a delight to the eyes."* Satan showed Christ all the kingdoms of the world promising Him them if He would worship him but once (Mt. 4:5-7). Today, Satan uses materialism.

Finally, she saw *"that the tree was desirable to make one wise"* This is the "pride of life." Satan tried to get Jesus to cast Himself off the Temple to show God's care for His Son (Mt. 4:8-10). Today, Satan appeals to egotism - a love of self. Satan hinted to Eve that she had the legitimate desire - to be like God - which God had forbidden her to fulfill.

## The Bad Choice

### All Eve's Senses Said Yes

Eve passed or failed according to how she answered the questions at this tree. Her senses of smell and taste said "yes." Her sense of sight said "yes." Her sense of hearing jammed with Satan's lies and half-truths said "yes." Her sense of touch said "yes." So, "she took from its fruit and ate." She failed to remember that God clearly had said "NO!"

### Adam Said Yes to Eve

Satan recruited her as a pusher for sin. Like drug pushers will have their customers become pushers. There is nothing that bothers the sinner more than for others to reject his rationalizations for his evil conduct. Sinners love companions. Instead of using her relationship to help him in his relationship with God, Eve helped Satan. Adam did not help his wife, but joined her in sin. Women have been trying at new tempting dishes on their husbands ever since. Husbands have continued to show lack of moral leadership.

## The Bitter Taste

### Eyes Opened

Biting the fruit did not make them know good and evil altogether as God knows it, but in an experimental sense, as the devil knows it. In point of knowledge, they became like God; in point of morality, like the tempter. Just as the serpent had said, their eyes were opened - but not to their divinity! Instead, they felt the burning sensation of shame and covered themselves.

### Corruption of the Flesh

Before temptation they were naked and not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). Then their eyes were opened. *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings"* (Gen. 3:7). Adam and Eve were the first fashion designers. However, they still considered themselves naked and so did God. God designed modest attire for them (Gen. 3:21). He established the first dress code.

### Loss of Desiring God's Companionship

Sin not only produces separation from God, but it creates a desire for that separation. *"And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden"* (Gen. 3:8).

### Fear and Shame

As soon as the transgression is actually over, the sense of the wrongfulness of the act rushes on the mind. *"And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?'"* (Gen. 3:12). God wants us to fear Him and He wants us to be ashamed of sin. Adam's sense of nakedness was, like his fear, an evil consequence of his rebellion. The sense of shame attaching to physically nakedness (2:25) manifested consciousness of inner nakedness, the stripping of the glory of holiness from the soul.

## The Cover Up

### They Hide

If the Lord knew where Adam and Eve were, why did He ask? God did not ask the question for His sake, but for Adam and Eve's sake, because of their sin. The sinner is not really hiding. Sinners are lost and headed for eternal destruction. Christ gave up everything to look for you. Jonah tried to pull the old Adam and Eve

disappearing act on the Lord and he was just as unsuccessful as they were (Jonah 1:3). David thought he could hide his sin by letting time take care of it, but God is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-12).

#### ☛ They Lied

Adam lied as to why he had hidden. They lied their way out hiding because they were naked. Ananias and Sapphira tried to cover up their sin by lying (Acts 5:1-11), and it did not work then either. Adam and Eve were taking after their new Father - the Devil (Jn. 8:44).

#### ☛ They Blamed

Our confessions of wrongs are usually only half-way confessions. "I did wrong, but" and some excuse is given.

Adam blamed God. *"Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate'"* (Gen. 3:12).

God gave us the wonderful power of choice. Adam and Eve made a wrong choice. The serpent really did trick Eve, and Eve really did give the fruit to Adam. How was Eve supposed to know the serpent was lying? She had never heard a lie before. How was Adam supposed to know he could not trust Eve? She had never proved untrustworthy in the past. Besides that, if God had not allowed the serpent to tempt Eve in the first place, she never would have sinned. Yet God did hold them accountable, and he threw them out of the garden. God had clearly instructed Adam not to eat of the fruit of a particular tree.

Adam also blamed Eve. The very first time man was confronted by God about his sin, he blamed it on someone else - his wife! Adam: "Look its the family cook's fault she gave this fruit to me for lunch." It did not work in the beginning, and it will not work now! Spouses continue to blame each other when they give into temptation. As someone has said, "Marriage is all give and take: Give blame, take credit."

They blamed their circumstances. In other words, "If I hadn't of been placed into this garden with this tree and in need of food, this would have never happened to me." How often do men today continue to blame their circumstances for their sins.

The blame game continues. Eve blamed the devil. *"And the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate'"* (Gen. 3:13). She knew the truth, but believed a lie.. She could not say like Flip Wilson use to say, "The Devil made me do it". Satan didn't hold Eve down and force the fruit down her throat.

When the blame game is played there are no winners.

## The Indigestion: Curses

#### ☛ Serpent

Satan's instrument, the serpent, went slithering in the dust, subject to trampling. The snake is still a symbol of his humiliation and condemnation. *"So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.'"* (Gen. 3:14).

#### ☛ Satan

*"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."* (Gen. 3:15). This was the first Messianic promise, but it was also the prophecy pointing to Christ's ultimate victory over Satan through the resurrection.

#### ☛ Woman

*"To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"* (Gen. 3:16). First, pain in childbirth. A blessing to make her love life and raise children right. Second, submission to husband. A blessing to help her learn submissiveness to gauge her relationship with God.

#### ☛ Man

Man is cursed with toil and hindrances. *"Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground,...'"* (Gen. 3:17-19a). Work was not now required of man a curse, for before his sin his duty was to *"dress the garden and keep it."* All these consequences have become additional testing trees in life.

#### ☛ They Were Cast out from the Tree of Life - Death

The final consequence for their sins was to be driven from the garden. *"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'-- therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till*

the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." (Gen. 3:22-24).

Separation from the Tree of Life meant eminent death. Death became necessary because of sin. While it is true that sin brought death, it is also true that death brings an end to the active career of the sinner. To eat of it and live forever would have been tragic. For they might live forever in sin. With no restraining influence to hold them in check sinners grow worse and worse as long as they retain their vigor of manhood and womanhood. They grow wiser and more skillful in their crimes and diabolical deeds. Think what the world might have been today if all the evil men of all the past ages had lived till now, becoming more and more depraved and all the while growing wiser and more cunning in their efforts to satisfy their growing thirst for sin.

### A Seed Of Hope

Pandora was a sweet and lovely maiden, who wore silvery raiment, bright garlands of blooming flowers, and a crown of gold. But when the gods sent her to man they gave her a box with a warning that she never open it. One day, however, her curiosity got the best of her and she opened the lid and peeked in. When she did terrible sorrows, miseries, and calamities flew out, Pandora tried to slam the lid down, but it was too late; all the evils which now plague the world had escaped. When she again opened the lid and looked in only one thing remained. At the bottom of the box lay a gleaming, shining treasure called HOPE.

The seed promise in verse fifteen is mankind's Hope. It seems that Eve thought that Cain was the "man" (Gen. 4:1), but he soon became the first murderer. It was in Jesus Christ, who was "*born of the woman*" (Gal. 4:4), that this promise was ultimately fulfilled. Christ is the seed of woman. He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8).

Ever since the Paradise of Eden there have been testing trees in the forests of life. When you come to the testing trees in life make the right choices. Do so remembering that there is the tree of life that awaits us after life is over. "Where art thou" when the Day of Judgment comes?

Questions:

1. T F Adam and Eve ate the forbidden apple.
2. List the gifts God gave man in paradise.
3. What is the one restraint God made and what was the warning for violation?
4. How did Satan slander the character of God before Eve?
5. How does God know the difference between good and evil if He never is tempted and never sins?
6. Match Eve's thoughts on the right and the sinful attitude on the left with the worldly appeal in the middle.

desire to make one wise	lust of the flesh	hedonism
good for food	pride of life	materialism
delight to the eyes	lust of the eyes	egotism

7. What should Adam have done and why?
8. What happened to Adam and Eve the moment they partook of the forbidden fruit?
9. What three things did Adam and Eve do in an attempt to cover up their sinful choice?
10. Match the curse.
 

Serpent	seed of woman to bruise his head
Satan	Band from the Garden of Eden
The man	crawl of belly and eat dust
The woman	pain in childbearing
Adam and Eve	toil and sweat providing a living
11. What is the seed of hope found in Genesis 3? By whom and when was this promise fulfilled?

Application & Discussion:

1. How do we as sinners continue to play the blame game today? Give specific examples.
2. What are the various testing trees you face in the forest of life?

Homework: This week write down some of the lies Satan is using on you when he tempts you.

# Christ's Victory over Temptation

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## Matthew 4:1-11

Twice in the history of the world the destiny of humanity has hung in the balance depending on the will and action of two men: Adam and Christ. The first yielded to Satan's temptation (Rom. 5:19). The second did not yield, ever. The contrasts and comparisons between these two is striking. Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden; Christ struggled in a lonely wilderness. Adam was at his best when tempted; Christ was hungry. Adam was the king of the old creation (Gen. 1:26); Christ is King of the new (spiritual) creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Adam sinned and lost his dominion (Heb. 2:6-9); Christ obeyed and regained what Adam lost and more (Rom. 5:12-21). Adam was defeated and brought death to humanity; Christ was victorious and brought life to all who will trust Him.

### Background

*"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1)*

† Temptation after Exaltation

Immediately after John baptized Jesus, the Spirit descended and the Father spoke His approval from heaven, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. Mark 1:12 says that this occurred *"immediately"* after His baptism. Satan's temptation came immediately after the high and holy experience of Jesus' baptism. Yesterday, the voice of the Father and the witness of John the Baptist; today, loneliness of the wilderness of temptation.

† Led up of the Spirit

*"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Mt. 4:1).* It was not done by presumption on the part of Jesus, nor was it for the mere display of His power in resisting temptation.

† Alone in the Wilderness

Wilderness indicates country destitute of inhabitants. The area was called *Jeshimmon*, which means "the Devastation." Surrounded by such dangers, the temptations offered by Satan were made more intense. Amid want and perils, Satan might suppose that Jesus would be more easily seduced from God.

† Temptation

We do not know what form the devil took in the wilderness when he tempted our Lord. Both Mark and Luke's account tell us that He was tempted for forty days prior to these three temptations. Remember, temptation is in no sense sin; for Christ was tempted, yet He was sinless (Heb. 4:15). Thus sinlessness does not preclude temptation. It is the yielding of the will to temptation which constitutes sin. Christ never yielded. Not to these three temptations. Not to the forty days of temptations. Not once in all of His thirty-three years upon the face of the earth.

### First Temptation: Stone To Bread

*"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' 4 But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:2-4)*

† Ripe for Temptation

Christ had been fasting for forty days. This fast was total abstinence from food for Luke says explicitly, *"he did eat nothing."* Next, is found one of the greatest understatement of all time: *"He then became hungry."* It is difficult for some of us to go one hour and forty minutes without eating, but what about forty days. Two other men fasted for forty days: Moses (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Ki. 19:8). There was probably no other time in Christ's earthly life when He was more susceptible to temptation. He was physically weak and thus extra vulnerable to the temptations of Satan. Satan came to entice Christ to sin. Sin would render Christ useless as a Savior for mankind. No temptation could have been more plausible or more likely to succeed than this one.

Satan's temptations appear reasonable. They often seem to be only urging us to do what is good and proper. They seem even to urge us to promote the glory of God, and to honor Him. There was no sin in being hungry. Yet Satan suggested that, if Christ were God's Son, God should not let Him hunger.

† Temptation to Doubt

Basically, Satan is saying: "*If You are the Son of God*", he was trying to cast despairing doubt in the mind of Christ. Evidently, Christ's belief in His Deity was a point of attack by Satan. When Jesus Christ came to earth He did not give up His deity, but He evidently chose not to express them and use them as a man. He had to learn and grow just like all men born into this world (Luke 2:52). Christ did not know He was the Son of God through omniscience, but through the Law and the Prophets, the witness of John the Baptist, and the voice out of the heavens at His baptism, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well- pleased*" (Mt. 3:17). He believed Himself to be the Son of God based on this evidence. Satan was trying to get Him to sin by causing Him to doubt God. His sin would not have been preforming the miracle, but doubting Divinely revealed evidence about His deity. The tempter's whole object was to get Him to distrust the heavenly testimony borne to Him at His baptism as the Son of God.

"If" played a significant role in this temptation. "If" is a small word with a big impact. It is powerful. Throughout Jesus' life on earth all the way to the cross. "*If you are the Christ, tell us plainly*" (Jn. 10:24). On the cross, "*If you are the son of God come down from the cross*" (Mt. 27:10). The Roman soldiers, "*If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself*" (Lk. 23:37). Even one of the thieves, "*If you are the Christ, save yourself and us*" (Lk. 23:39). Satan set the condition that Christ prove His son-ship by turning stone to bread. God set no such condition.

#### † Temptation to Trust in Self

Would Jesus accept the will of His Father that this was a period of privation designed for His spiritual profit, or would He take matters into His own hands and use His own powers to meet His needs? To have yielded to Satan's suggestion would have shown distrust in the Father; for the Father, by the Spirit, had brought Him to this point; therefore the Father was able to provide for His needs at the proper time. Today, Satan would have us be like the Pharisees, "*Who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*" (Lk. 18:9). In this temptation of Christ is was a question of putting immediate needs ahead of eternal purposes.

#### † Lust of the Flesh

Satan uses three main temptations as His weapons in battle against mankind. He fashioned these temptations out of this world. "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*" (1 Jn. 2:16) These are the three main methods Satan uses to tempt man to sin. He used them first with Eve in Genesis 3:6 and he has used them ever since. He was successful in using these on all men until the day he met Christ. Satan was following the pattern introduced in Eden; He appealed to Eve by presenting the fruit of the tree in such a manner that she saw it was good for food.

As yet He had performed no miracle. Was He really the Messiah? Essentially Satan was saying, "Jesus, You have the right to meet Your God-given needs when You deem appropriate. you're hungry now, so eat!" Christ could have rationalized that there was nothing wrong with eating bread to appease His hunger, and therefore nothing wrong with turning stone to bread, but He knew there was much more involved. It would have been the misuse of His powers given for one purpose to gratify another. Jesus expounded upon the principle in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:25-34.)

#### † An Appeal to the Authority of the Scriptures

How did Christ deal with this? Did He perform a miracle to fill His stomach and prove Satan wrong? No. He used the written Word as the lamp for His feet (Ps. 119:105). He said, "*It is written*". He appealed to the authority of the scriptures to answer. Eve also started with "*God hath said*" (Gen. 3:3), but she was not constant in her adherence to God's Word. Christ knew that man needed first to sustain spiritual life. In this Jesus identified Himself with the human family - Man shall not live by bread alone. Men who put the securing of bread first in their lives will be malnourished spiritually. Eve's biggest mistake was talking things over with Satan. She should have repeated back to him verbatim what God had commanded her to do and then just walked away.

Jesus quoted a portion of the last words of warning from Moses to the Israelites before they entered Canaan. Moses had reminded the Israelites that God had led them for forty years in the wilderness to humble and test them and to discover whether they would obey Him or not. God tested them with hunger and then taught them to rely upon Him to care and provide for them. He did not provide them bread, but He gave them manna from heaven to sustain their lives. He gave them instructions as to how much they could gather for a day's provision and said if they gathered any more that it would breed worms and stink. Some gathered more manna and that is exactly what happened. Yet the Israelites were not just sustained by the manna they gathered, but by obeying the voice of God. Moses concluded explaining that God's lesson was: man does not live by the mere satisfaction of His physical needs, but Man lives by the care and provision of the Lord (Deut. 8:1-3). If Israel spent, not forty days, but forty years in a waste, howling wilderness, where there were no means of human subsistence, not starving, but divinely provided for, on purpose to prove to every age that human support depends not upon bread, but upon God's unfailing word of promise.



Jesus was confident God would provide for Him, too. Satan was tempting Jesus to take things into His own hands. Jesus' response brought to light the motive behind Satan's request. In essence He said, "My ultimate responsibility is not simply to satisfy My physical needs, but to obey My Father in heaven." Jesus established His Sonship, not on Satan's terms, but on the Father's.

## Second Temptation: On The Pinnacle Of The Temple

"5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: *'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'*" 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, *'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'*" (Matt. 4:5-7).

### ✠ Location of Temptation

The temple was built atop a small mountain, Mt. Moriah. The royal portico of Herod was akin to the Temple. It would have been a 480 foot drop into the Kidron valley below. According to Josephus, it was "vastly high" in elevation while the valley immediately below was "very deep, and its bottom could not be seen." An immense tower built on the very edge of this precipice, from the top of which dizzy height Josephus says one could not look at the bottom (Antiquities, 15,11,3).

### ✠ Quoting Scripture out of Context

Satan knows the Bible. He can quote it. Satan supported his dare with an "edited" quotation from Psalm 91:11,12 concerning the protection of God over his children. The context of the Psalm teaches that the Lord protects those who love, follow, and obey Him (see Ps. 91:1,9,14). "To keep you in all your ways" which suggests one who has his feet in the ways God has directed. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of His people who are placed by Him in trial or danger; but it is not true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke Him and trifle with the promised help.

Satan was asking Jesus, "Since You believe the Word of God, then why not prove one of God's promises?" Beware of taking promises out of their context or claiming promises when you have not met the conditions. Satan arrays scripture against scripture; he would misapply it. Christ knew His Bible and would not allow this.

### ✠ Temptation to Test God

Christ was to prove His deity to Satan by testing the love of God and making an unnecessary show of God's power. He would not put the love of God to the test by a needless miracle. Miracles were preformed by the Lord to produce belief (Jn. 20: 30,31). Jesus was constantly urged to do miracles to satisfy curiosity. Satan along with all the other devils already believed. "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (Js. 2:19). As a matter of fact, some the best confessions concerning Jesus as the Son of God came from demons.

### ✠ Sin of Presumption

The first temptation was one of doubt, the second was one of over trust. The first temptation was under-confidence, now it is over-trust and presumption. If He trusts God, then the devil challenges Him to act on that trust. Often men start by doubting salvation from sin, and end recklessly presuming salvation in sin. Christ would never fall into either category.

### ✠ Pride of Life

This temptation was an attempt to puff Jesus up with pride to "prove" Himself. Satan tempts those who profess faith to let their "faith" lead them forward and expect God will follow them. Such religion is done to be seen of men. Jesus said those who sound a trumpet when giving alms are hypocrites (Mt. 6:24). So are those who pray long and loud in public places (Matt. 6: 5-7). Our lights must shine so others can see our good works and glorify the Father, not us. "You stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20).

### ✠ Harmony of the Scriptures

Christ replies, "It is written, again", thus showing the harmony of the scriptures. To get a right understanding of God's Will we must compare Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is not made up of isolated texts.

The context of His quote is Deuteronomy 6:16. Obviously Moses was reminding the Israelites of a former occasion when they had tried God at Massah. In the wilderness the Israelites camped at a place where there was no water and they tempted or put the Lord to the test saying, "Is the Lord not among us?" (Ex. 17:1-7). The people were thirsty and murmured (Ex. 17:7). The Israelites saw the plagues God brought upon Egypt. They saw God divide the waters of the Red Sea while His pillar of fire stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians. He had enabled Moses to sweeten the waters of Marah and had fed the children of Israel with manna, but these were not sufficient grounds for faith for the Israelites. For them, God must needs continually prove Himself.

By the use of the word "again" Jesus is show that God does not contradict His Word. Scripture is harmonious. One verse is not to be used to nullify another or to counteract the whole tenor of Divine truth. God does not give us conflicting duties. For instance, God specified vocal music in New Testament worship (Eph. 5:29;

Col. 3:16). Satan will say, "David played on a harp," implying that if David did, it is scriptural for us to do so in New Testament worship. Satan's message is: "If you believe John 3:16 you cannot believe Ac. 2:38; Mk. 16:16; Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 3:21."

### Third Temptation: The Kingdoms Of The World

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (Matt. 4:8-10).

#### † World Tour

In Luke's account of the temptation of Christ he says it took place "*in a moment of time*" (Lk. 4:5). "In a moment of time" was some supernatural operation. In neither of these last two incidents are we told how Jesus was transported from one to the other.

Also, suddenness aids temptation. When crude business men make a fast deal and make everything look real good at first, the people who see it may jump right in and grab what they think is a great deal.

#### † The Temptation to Compromise

Now Satan has resorted to a blatant temptation. There was no deceit and no mention of Jesus' Sonship. In fact, he has ceased now to present his temptations under the mask of piety, and he stands out unblushingly as the rival of God Himself in his claims on the homage of men. Despairing of success as an angel of light, he throws off all disguise. Satan promised Christ all the kingdoms of the earth, but it would cost Him. Christ would have to worship Satan just once. Satan shows some generosity in this temptation, but it has its price tag. Satan is slow to show generosity and to give anything. Most will sell out to him for nothing. Any compromise with Satan puts one in the position of being his slave.

This temptation offered an easy path. The devil is offering Jesus a short cut to the achieving of His objective. God's way led to the cross (Mt. 26:39). The Son of man would not take the easy way out. Satan's sweetest temptation was the most repulsive to Christ.

However, Satan's promise is faulty. Three times he is called by our Lord Himself, "*the prince of this world*" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul calls him "*the god of this world*" (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan rules over the world because of his control over the men in it (1 Jn. 5:19). Jesus called him, "*the ruler of this world*" (Jn. 12:31). Regardless of all this, the world is ultimately God's.

If we are to have God's promise, it must be obtained God's Way. To seek a right thing in a wrong way is still wrong. Jesus had come to establish a kingdom, one consisting of people from all nations. Satan would give a speedier possession, but God a more lasting one. Satan's offer to surrender was not unconditional. It was a surrender on Satan's terms rather than in God's way. Christ wasn't willing to make a treaty, but conquer Satan's kingdom. Good ends do not justify evil means, for evil means bring evil ends. To establish a Messianic kingdom by worldly means would produce a worldly kingdom. Satan obviously did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom.

God is God, and right is right and wrong is wrong. There can be no compromise in the war with evil (Dt. 6:13; 10:20). Satan may offer a Christian a "better" job for just the small price of missing some of the worship services of the Lord. He may offer a preacher a continuing paycheck for just the small price of remaining silent on a matter that needs to be preached.

#### † Appeals to the Lust of the Eyes

Many things look good to us, but they are not good for us. Eve saw the forbidden fruit was appealing. Such offers may be large to the world, but are small in the eyes of Jesus and Christians. According to Psalm 2:6-9, God had already promised these kingdoms to Christ. God had promised Jesus "*the nations for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*" (Psalm 2:8).

#### † Proper Application of Scripture

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (Mt. 4:10). For the third time Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy (6:13). The scripture was written to the end that all might only worship God and serve Him. This text refers back to the incident of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6).

Christ would worship and serve only the Lord. Whatever we worship is the god we serve, we cannot do both God and the world (Mt. 6:24). Only by worshiping and serving God can a right end be attained. Jesus knew that by doing so, He would not only obtain all earthly authority, but all authority in heaven (Mt. 28:18).

## Victory Over Temptation

*Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. (Matt. 4:11).*

### ✠ By Remembering Who You Are

Jesus came into the world to save the world. His major obstacle to fulfilling His mission was the ruler of the world, Satan. Twice Satan tried to cast doubt as to His identity. All three quotes are drawn from a section of Scripture that opens with these words: "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*" (Dt. 6:4-5). Christ later called this "*the first of all the commandments*" (Mk. 12:29). When facing Satan's temptations remember that you are a child of God, who does not listen to strangers.

### ✠ By Knowing and Using God's Word

One reason why Jesus never sinned is that He was not ignorant. He always did what He knew was right. The Son of God recognized the binding authority of scripture, the harmony in what God said, and the proper application of it. Jesus verbally confronted Satan with the Truth; and eventually Satan gave up and left. Christ is the "*Captain of our salvation*" (Heb. 2:10-18). He shows us, His soldiers, how to use the Sword of the Spirit to defeat Satan's weapons of temptation. You will see that the three pronged pitch fork of Satan (consisting of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) was no match for the Word of God.

### ✠ By Exposing and Deposing the Devil

Finally, Jesus replied, "*away with you Satan.*" Christ knew that Satan's short-cut would not be lasting. In the first two temptations, Satan was subtle, as if disguised. In the third he was proud and vain. Jesus now tears off his mask, calling him by name. Satan had no right or place in the presence of Christ. When Peter tempted Jesus, the Master also called him by name, but He told Peter to get behind Him, for the proper place of a disciple is in the rear or behind the one he follows. Satan was His adversary, not a helper.

Temptation must be promptly rejected. Notice, Jesus didn't stop to weigh the matter. We have this choice. We can tell him to "get" or we can invite him into our heart and give him a comfortable seat. "*Resist the Devil and he will flee from you*" (Js. 4:7).

### ✠ It Is but a Temporary Victory

Satan only left "*for a season*" (Lk. 4:12). Certainly Jesus faced many other occasions of temptation (See, Jn. 6:15; Lk. 22:28; Mt. 27:39-44). Forty days of victory did not preclude future temptations. We must always be alert for the Devil's return, no matter how victorious we've been.

### ✠ Victory Celebration

Angels came to Jesus to serve Him, possibly to provide Him the sustenance as one did for Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-8) and the support that He had denied Himself during the forty days of His fast. Remember there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. God is there through it all. He is faithful. We may feel alone, but we are not alone.

Satan is the strong man; Christ is the stronger than he (Mt. 12:29; Lk. 11:21f). Jesus showed us the way to handle Satan. Temptations are not sins, but they are the battles we all must fight. They will leave the victor stronger and the vanquished weaker. If we, like Christ, resist the devil, he will flee from us for a season.

### Questions:

1. Contrast the temptation of Christ to the temptation of Adam.
2. T F Jesus was only tempt three times in the wilderness.
3. What was Satan's objective in the first temptation to get Jesus to sin?
4. How did Jesus respond to this first temptation?

5. What was the second temptation of Jesus in Matthew's gospel?
6. How did Jesus respond to this second temptation?
7. What did Satan offer to do for Jesus in the third temptation? What was the price tag?
8. Why would Satan's plan not work for Jesus?
9. How did Jesus respond to this temptation?
10. " \_\_\_\_\_ the Devil and he will \_\_\_\_\_ from you" (James 4:7).
11. T F Satan left Jesus never to return and tempt Him.
12. Match the temptation on the right and the scripture on the left with love of the world in the middle.

Turn stone into bread	pride of life	Deuteronomy 6:13
Jump off the pinnacle of the Temple	lust of the flesh	Deuteronomy 6:16
Worship Satan for all the kingdoms	lust of the eyes	Deuteronomy 8:3

Application & Discussion:

1. Jesus has been tempted just like we are. What things can be learn from Him to aid us in resisting temptations?
2. How does the timing of the temptation increase the potency of the temptation? How can a Christian counter this?

Homework: List several passages of scripture you should memorize to help you battle temptation.

# Combatants in Temptation

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A bumper sticker read: "Lead Me not into Temptation - I can find it Myself." However, if the truth be known we do get help in finding temptations to sin. They are: Satan, The World, The Flesh, but not God.

## Not God

*"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"* (James 1:13).

From James 1:13 we learn two facts about God regarding temptation: 1) God cannot be tempted by evil and 2) God does not tempt anyone to commit sin.

However, there are those times when God has allowed men to be tempted to do evil and other times when God has put man to the test to encourage him to do good. He permitted Satan to tempt Job (1:12; 2:6). Job realized the value of this test when he said, *"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold"* (23:10). God tested Abraham's faith (Gen. 22:1). The difference is that God does not seek to ensnare us to sin. He is mainly concerned with the development of inner character. He charts growth toward maturity.

God tests man by permitting Satan to tempt him. He allowed Peter to be tempted in order to test him. *"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren'"* (Lk. 22:31,32). G. Campbell Morgan summed up Jesus' warning, *"Satan has obtained you by asking"*. Testing is the work of both God and Satan. God tests man so he may conquer, be reprove and improved never to produce sin. Satan always tests us to produce sin in our lives. All power belongs to God. Satan could not have hurt a single flea on a hair of Job's oldest camel without the permission of God (Job 1; 1 Cor. 10:13).

God has no relationship with evil. God has no association with evil and he no more tempts man when he allows him to be tried than He is responsible for sin because He allows evil to exist in the world. God is not to be blamed for the sin that exists in this world today. Mankind is to be blamed (Rom. 5:12-14). Evil offers no test for His nature. It never gets inside Him so it never can come out of Him. *"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts"* (Is. 6:3). "Holy" means "totally separate from sin." God is love, God is light, and God is true (1 Jn. 4:8; 1:5; Jn. 3:33). The heavenly Father is the author of good gifts (Js. 1:17). He will eventually destroy the Devil and His angels (Mt. 25:40).

Man has often blamed God for temptation to do evil. Ever since Adam and Eve started playing the blame game in the Garden: *"The woman YOU gave me."* He does still control the universe and rule in the affairs of men. Psychologists call this little game *"projection."* They mean we project blame away from ourselves. Some will argue: "Our homosexuality is not our fault. God made us this way. It cannot be a sin." Others will say, "We do not have a choice as to who we are. If God wanted us to be different, He would have made us different." Most often you will hear the excuse: "I'm only human". In actuality, you are ultimately blaming God when you blame anything or anybody for your weakness in a particular area. If you thought about your sin long enough, you could find a way to pin the blame on God. To blame God is to blaspheme by assigning a negative evil attribute to God's nature.

## Satan

Satan is the author of temptation (1 Chr. 21:1; Mt. 4:1; Jn. 13:2; 1 Th. 3:5). Satan's names portray him as the Tempter. "Satan" is used fifty-four times in the Bible and means "an adversary". "Devil" means "slanderer" and is found thirty-five times. He is also referred to as:

- ▶ Beelzebub, Mt. 12:24
- ▶ Wicked one, Mt. 13:19
- ▶ Adversary, 1 Pet. 5:8
- ▶ Roaring lion, 1 Pet. 5:8
- ▶ God of this world, 2 Cor. 4:4
- ▶ Belial, 2 Cor. 6:15
- ▶ Murderer, Jn. 8:44

- ▶ Father of lies, Jn. 8:44
- ▶ Liar, Jn. 8:44
- ▶ Old Serpent, Rev. 12:9
- ▶ Prince of this world, Jn. 14:30
- ▶ Prince of the power of the air, Eph. 2:2
- ▶ Tempter, Mt. 4:3
- ▶ Great dragon, Rev. 12:9
- ▶ Accuser, Rev. 12:10
- ▶ Abaddon or destroyer, Rev. 9:11
- ▶ The evil one, Mt. 13:18,38
- ▶ Deceiver of the whole world, Rev. 12:9
- ▶ Not Lucifer (Is. 14:12). This term is used in Isaiah to refer to the king of Babylon never to the Devil.

Satan is the master of temptation. One writer described the Devil as "the greatest soul-winner on earth." He has thousands years to sharpen many of his skills in winning new converts. He is the master of disguise. He looks like a soft, cuddly puppy, but has the reward of a mad dog (2 Cor. 11:14). He exercises a powerful influence (1 Cor. 7:55). Satan had the power of death before Christ, but after the resurrection Satan was no longer able to hold the fear of death over the heads of those who have faith in the resurrected Savior (Heb. 2:14,15). The Father of lies has many false teachers (2 Cor. 11:15). He is evil in His nature and can never be trusted in any circumstance, regardless of how appealing and innocent he may make sin appear. "It is when the Deceiver appears most honorable and legitimate that he is most dangerous.

"THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT". The late, Flip Wilson popularized this saying years ago. Since we know Satan has something to do with the temptation process, it makes sense that he would be the one to blame. Nevertheless, we need to be aware that the Devil cannot make us do anything. Satan's only power over people is through manipulation and deceit. If he could actually make us do things, he would not need to go to all the trouble of deceiving us. If Satan could make us sin, the temptation process would be superfluous. You cannot blame anyone else. Nothing outside ourselves is strong enough - not even Satan - to cause us to sin.

## The World

The World tempts us or better put, the people of this world tempt us (Pr. 1:10). The sins of Job's three friends as well as the sins of his wife added to Job's trial. King David was placed under severe trial, first by the sins of Saul and then by the sins of his sons. We are warned not to fall into the temptations of others and not to tempt others to sin (Rom. 14:13).

Perhaps, it could be argued that the world offers more temptations today. Temptation is increasing in amount mostly due to the fact that we have contact with more people and a wider variety of people in this world. Furthermore, yielding to temptation is increasingly accepted. Although Situation ethics and peer pressure have always been around since the Garden, we have more situations and peers to tempt us. Temptation has increased in pervasiveness, at least compared to the last couple of generations. Homosexuality has come out of the closet. Grade schoolers are hit with drug trafficking. Sex education in some schools is pornographic. Dr. C. Everett Koop has said that youngsters "with peach fuzz on their cheeks are made to believe that if they are not sexually active by the time they are 14, life has passed them by and left them in a very dry place." Temptation has increased in persuasiveness. TV, false science, advertisements all offer intense graphic temptations at a continuous and countless pace.

An advancing world offers many environmental hazards. As we have seen it also offers many spiritual hazards. These are trials that come upon us because we are in the world. As Christians we are to be unstained by the world (Js. 1:27). We are not to love the world (1 Jn. 2:15), because this world is passing away (1 Jn. 2:17). Although there are many great developments in our technologically advanced society, we must beware of the base things of the world (1 Cor. 1:28).

## The Flesh

Fleshly desires are the target of temptation. *"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"* (Js. 1:14,15). The temptations are in me. H. W. Beecher wrote, "Temptations imply desires within, men ought not to say 'how powerfully the devil tempts', but 'how strongly I am tempted'". To be tempted is to be human. If we had no desires that could be tempted, we would either be as beasts working out of instinct or we

would be as vegetable life and be purely passive or as a computer doing simply what it was programmed to do by the programmer. (NOTE: Although to be tempted is to be human, this does not mean, to give into temptations is to be human). If the world and the devil did not have something that we want, they would have no power over us at all. If the external has no appeal to the internal there is no temptation. Satan tempts a man to commit adultery with a woman because God has created the general desire in all men for sex with women. The Devil can tempt us with a desire to steal our food because God created in us all the desire for food.

In some instances of the use of the word "desires" or "lusts", the Greek word "epithumia" has the meaning of a good desire. Paul had a strong desire to see the face of the Thessalonians (1 Th. 2:17). He also had a desire to depart and be with the Lord (Phil. 1:23). These are good desires or lusts.

Temptation is aimed at our God given desires. Desires are not wrong, they are God's creations. Satan appeals to our legitimate desires with illegitimate opportunities. God has provided a way to meet these desires. For example, in the garden the desire for food was met with any and every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, not God, is the one who suggested that Eve's desires be fulfilled in an illegitimate manner. A failure on the part of men to see this results in arguments such as: "If God doesn't want me to \_\_\_\_\_, then why do I feel the way I do?" or "why would God give me such a strong desire to \_\_\_\_\_ if He didn't want me to fulfill it?" It is not, "why won't God let me fulfill my desires?" It should be, "When in God's perfect timing can I fulfill my desires?" Or "How would God prefer me to fulfill my desires?" Every natural desire has a lawful means of satisfaction in God's system. Homosexual men and women were indeed created by God with a desire for sex, but the only way God permitted for this desire to be met is for a life long monogamous relationship with the opposite sex called "marriage."

If you can only get far enough back into the mystery of your sin, you will find a desire which is not wrong in itself. Behind every theft was a desire for ownership that was misdirected. Behind every act of gluttony was a pleasure in good food. Behind every fornication was the desire for human intimacy. Thus every person is a potential fornicator, killer, covetor, thief, liar, drunkard, etc. all he has to do is chose to satisfy his God given desires in a way other than what God has prescribed. Teenage girls need someone to love them unconditionally. Many will never know that kind of love simply because they cannot or will not break away from the substitutes Satan has thrown in their path. Alcoholics and drug addicts chose to cope with life's pressures by running. It seems like a quick and easy way to cope. Yet it never solves any of life's problems. It simply postpones the solution and enslaves them. Our unique inner "itch" longs to be satisfied by that particular outer "scratch." The question is, "How are to going to scratch it, God's way or our way?"

The Greek word for "enticed" is related to the word "bait" in Js. 1:14. Vine defines it as "to lure by bait" (p. 366). James is using a metaphor drawn from fishing. Being tempted is a matter of being lured. Satan, the master fisherman of the world, is a fisher of men. He knows his prey. He knows you better than you know yourself. Since temptation is an individual matter, he knows what lures us. The artificial lures fishermen use look so phony, it astonishes me that any fish would fall for them: shiny metallic and gaudy plastic, hot pink and neon colors in stripes and spots. Satan must use the lure that corresponds to the person's desire. Just as a fisherman must use the right lure to catch a specific kind of fish. He knows when to lure us. A survey taken and printed in *Discipleship Journal*, Nov/Dec, 1992 recorded responses to this question: When are you most likely to face temptation? When you have not spent much time with God - 81%. When you have not had enough rest - 57%. When life is difficult - 45%. During times of change - 42%. After a significant spiritual victory - 37%. When life is going smoothly - 30%. Satan knows what hooks us. Remember, hidden in every piece of bait is a hook.

Satan's short-range goal is to get us to satisfy God given needs and desires in ways that are outside the boundaries God has set up. Turn our desire to be loved into lust, our desire to be accepted and respected into pride, and our desire for success into greed. Our need for food and desire for sex are two examples. As a result, some people destroy their bodies by overeating or eating the wrong things; others starve themselves for fear of being overweight. When it comes to the desire for sex, God says, "One man for one woman for life." Satan says, "Any man for any woman until you are ready for someone else." Satan's appeal to you and me is to meet God-given needs and fulfill God-given desires the easiest, quickest, and least painful way.

While Christ was praying in the Garden the night in which He was betrayed, He had to keep warning the three disciples, Peter, James and John to stay awake and pray. One of these times He warned them, "*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Mt. 26:41).

Temptations have strength through our weaknesses. Causes of human weakness may be the sin that has destroyed our spirituality. Evil may have corrupted our hearts. Our desires become corrupted in the evil thoughts of the heart (Mk. 7:20ff). Our physical weaknesses can lead to trials of our faith. We are spirit/physical beings functioning in a material world. We need sleep. Sometimes this need can hinder spirituality (Mk. 14:38). As when the disciples were sleeping instead of praying. Our psychological nature has been disrupted by sin. Emotional extremes, depression, false guilt, difficulty with pride, sexual problems, obsessions, fears, etc. Satan attacks us

through our passions. One passion he can really use is anger, giving place to the devil (Eph. 4:26,27). Cain killed the brother for it (Gen. 4:5). Naaman would have continued in his leprosy because of his anger (2 Ki. 5:11,12). I am never a more fitting servant of Satan than when I am angry! Man is a lazy creature. This too can lead to sin (Js. 4:17). Also, there is the danger of insensitivity to the sinfulness of sin. Psychologists call this process "desensitization." In the 50's a talk show host was reprimanded for using "water closet" on the air. Today, they will show one using it. One poet described this process: "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien; As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen to oft, familiar her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace." Removal of external restraints or the lack of social disapproval of sin. A tree that reaches maturity in the shelter of the forest has no trouble standing against the storm - as long as the forest remains, but if all the other trees are cut down and it is left alone, it is not as likely to survive a storm as the tree that grew up alone and developed certain internal strengths. 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns against over confidence in our strength: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Perhaps both Peter and King David are prime examples of this. The list of the various causes of our weakness are unending. Peter refers to "various trials." The same Greek word from which is derived "various" comes our English word "pok-a-dot." Meaning many shades, shapes, and sizes like the coat of a leopard. Thus, is the variety of our trials.

Remember, weakness is not an excuse to yield to temptation. Some use their weaknesses as a reason not to try to resist. "I'm just weak". A weak person is *"like a city broken into and left without walls"* (Prov. 25:28). Yet this does not excuse any one of surrendering without a fight. We must resist the desires of the flesh. Paul buffeted his body daily (1 Cor. 9:27). Talk about resisting temptation. "Buffeted" means to beat black and blue. Paul would figuratively beat himself up daily just to overcome his weaknesses and temptations. We must flee fleshly desires and turn to Christ who can help us subdue them (Rom. 7:26).

The bait is dropped into this world. The inner desire is attracted to that bait. Sin occurs when we yield. When we chose to bite the bait, we are hooked by sin. At no point in the temptation process do we lose our ability to say, "NO!" However, when we say "YES" we have sinned. Sin results in tragic consequences. We end up hooked and fried. The end result of temptation is death *"Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death"* (Js. 1:15). We are talking about a life and death situation.

Questions:

1. What two reasons are given for why man cannot blame God when he is tempted? Explain why these preclude God from temptation.
2. What is God's objective in allowing Satan to tempt man? What is Satan's objective in tempting men?
3. Draw a diagram showing the progression of temptation according to James 1:14,15.

#### 4. Matching

Lucifer	adversary
Satan	removed the fear of death
Devil	king of Babylon
Christ	slanderer



5. List ways in which temptations has increased in these times.

6. T F All desires of man are evil.

7. Match the God given desire with Satan's sinful ways of fulfilling them.

sex	Drinking and drugs
ownership of things	sex outside of marriage
self-esteem	Gluttony
hunger	Lying about ourselves
have a baby	Homosexuality
stress relief	Stealing

8. How is being tempted like fishing?

9. "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the \_\_\_\_\_ is weak" (Mt. 26:41).

10. List several things that can weaken us and make us more vulnerable to temptations.

11. T F Some people are just too weak. They have no choice but to just given into temptation.

#### Application & Discussion:

1. List the order or progression of temptation in verses fourteen and fifteen. Compare this to the temptation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

2. God did test some men with trials, such as Abraham and Job (Genesis 22:1; Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 7:19; Deuteronomy 29:2; Job 1:1f; Psalms 95:8). Is this a contradiction with what James has said about God? Explain.

Homework: You may not be able to keep the thoughts of temptation from flying across your mind, but you can keep the temptation from building a nest in your heart.

# The Enemy and His Weapons

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Just who is the Tempter? The term "Satan" is derived from the Hebrew Word "Sa - Ton" which means "adversary". The verb form of this word is "sa-tan" which means "to lie in wait." Therefore, the word "satan" literally means "an adversary who lies in wait." Satan has not changed his strategy since he tempted Adam and Eve in Eden. If it worked on two perfect people in a perfect environment with a perfect relationship with God, think how much more effective it will be on us.

Satan is very good at his job. His arsenal of tools are tailored to tempt. He knows each one of our Achilles' heel and is a marksman who never misses. Like a football coach who devises a play that scores points until a successful defense is found, Satan does not change His game plan.

## The Tempter's Objective

Why does the Tempter tempt? Is there any logical reasoning behind his efforts to lure us into sin? Satan knows that if he can get us to fall in love with this world, we will not be able to love God. This world is his domain and he wants our love for it. He sinned and was kicked out of heaven (Jd. 6, 2 Pet. 2:4). He is the ruler of darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12) and "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). John warns, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love the father is not in him*" (1 Jn. 2:15). Love of the world is proof of not loving God. True, love of God is hatred of sin (Ps. 9:7). Loving this world creates enmity with God. "*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*" (Js. 4:4). Demas is an example of this, because he loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10).

## The Devil's Triangle

### ▲ A Paradigm for Temptation

If you have learned a foreign language, you probably learned to conjugate one particular verb as a pattern for all the other verbs. This verb was called a paradigm. As you continue your study, you found that not every verb followed the exact pattern of the original verb. A paradigm for temptation is found in 1 John 2:16: "*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.*"

### ▲ Lust of the Flesh

Eve "*saw the tree was good for food*" (Gen. 3:6). Jesus was tempted by Satan to turn stone into bread (Mt. 4:3). David lusted after Bathsheba. Samson: "*I saw a woman*" and the rest of his life was from thence exemplified as a He-man with a She-weakness. There are many avenues for the lust of the flesh as listed in Galatians 5:19-21.

Sexual sins are perhaps the best known forms of this lust. Women affect men by their looks and by the way they look - by how they dress and the way they look to men. Men affect women by what they say and by what and how they touch. So gentlemen, guard what you say and how you say it. Also, be careful how you touch a woman. You have a responsibility before God to assist in her purity. Hands off! "Pull down the window shades" when the women in the world, like Bathsheba, fail to use their shades.

Peter warns, "*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*" (1 Pet. 2:11).

Today, we are tempted by this through the philosophy of Hedonism. "*1. the doctrine that pleasure is the only proper goal of moral endeavor. 2. The pursuit of pleasure.*" Call it what you may, the lust of the flesh demonstrates a great love for this world.

### ▲ Lust of the Eyes

Eve saw "*that it was a delight to the eyes*" (Gen. 3:6). Jesus was shown all the kingdoms of the world and was promised them, if He would just fall down and worship Satan. The eyes can be an avenue for light or darkness. It depends upon your choice.

The lust of the eyes is what we commonly refer to as "Materialism." A few years ago pop star Madonna sang about being a material girl. Today, most of those in the world can aptly be described as materialistic (2 Tim.

3:2). Yes, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:9) and leads to departure from the faith (6:10). Having, needing or just wanting things is not wrong. The temptation is to covet, hoard, and be greedy. Such men are never satisfied (Pr. 27:20; Eccl. 5:20). Yet, in this land of opportunity and prosperity we rarely see covetousness and greed as a sin. One Catholic priest who had spent forty-two years listening to confessions said that covetousness was about the only sin he never heard anyone confess. The Rich Young Ruler would not obey Jesus because of his love for his worldly goods. Remember, life is more than possessions (Lk. 12:15).

#### ▲ The Pride of Life

Once more, Eve saw *"that the tree was desirable to make one wise,"* (Gen. 3:6). Satan so tempted Jesus by trying to get Him to cast Himself off the Temple wall (Mt. 4:5). Nebuchadnezzar's heart was lifted up with pride when he observed the greatness of his capital, Babylon (Dan. 4:30; 5:2). When King Uzziah's pride got the best of him God cursed him with leprosy (2 Chr. 26:16).

The Devil is proud so he wishes to make us alike him (1 Tim. 3:6; Rom. 1:30). An oversized ego leads to contempt and rejection of God's Word and ministers (Jer. 13:2) and leads to self-deception (Jer. 49:16). It is a hindrance to seeking God (Hos. 7:10). "God is for weaklings" or "Religion is a crutch" they claim.

Today, Egotism abounds. Success and self-improvement seminars and programs focus on the power of self. Self-absorbed man cries out "My rights, my life, my body, my future..." God warns that he resists the proud. *"But he gives more grace. Therefore, He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist he devil and he will flee from you."* (Js. 4:6,7).

#### ▲ The Triumphant Triad

Just how can a Christian deal with the power of the Devil's Triangle. Three virtues which we will call "The Triumphant Triad": Faith, Hope, and Love are closely connected in the Bible (1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5,6) and can help us overcome the Devil's devices. Love is against the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:13). Faith is against the lust of the eyes (Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Jn. 5:4,5). It sees that which no human eye can see. Hope is against the boastful pride of life (Col. 1:23; Rom. 12:12). The hope of heaven humbles the haughty heart.

## Devices of the Devil

#### ▲ Satan Has Many Devices

*"Lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Cor. 2:11). In this passage, Paul makes reference to the discipline of a member of the church at Corinth. There is the possibility Satan will take advantage of the circumstances surrounding discipline. Satan might gain advantage of a congregation by encouraging the members to ignore sin and neglect discipline. Not only had the sinful man fallen into the domain of Satan, but the entire congregation was also falling into his domain. Sometimes members choosing to exercise discipline show respect of persons in this endeavor. Satan can retain his influence by encouraging members to hold grudges and not forgive a sinful brother who has repented. Thus, the brother could become so obsessed with grief and guilt he would return to Satan. At a time when a weak brother desperately needs the help, such edification is often unavailable to him.

"Schemes" indicate that the Devil has a "plan". Satan is not haphazardly wandering around tossing temptations here and there. He has a plan, a plan he has tested and perfected. Each temptation is "tailor-made".

What is a temptation for one may not be for another. Yet, he does have a common bag of tricks.

#### ▲ Deception

Deception was the first device of the devil. It worked on Eve. The closest parallel to Satan's deceptive abilities is found in the advertising business. A good advertiser can manipulate your thoughts and emotions to the point of believing you must have his product now! There you are, watching some sort of athletic competition on television. The last thing on your mind is purchasing a new car. Then a mattress ad comes on. You think how comfortable a good night sleep would feel. Next, comes a commercial with a big, juicy burger and you feel yourself getting hungry. Then an exotic cruise.

Satan, is the master of disguise. He came to Eve in the form of a serpent. He can assume the form of the angel of light *"...For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light"* (2 Cor. 11:14). Yet, in John Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Dante's "Inferno" Satan is pictured as a hideous appearing creature. The Deceiver would be a lot easier to identify if he showed up in a red suit with a pointed tail, a pitch fork, and horns.

He is the master of deception. The Devil is called the deceiver (Rev. 12:9) and *"the Father of lies"* (Jn. 8:44). Through his deceptions he is able to blind the eyes of the world. *"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them"* (2 Cor. 4:3,4).

The methods deployed by the Devil to deceive are diverse (Heb. 3:13). He deceived Eve by calling God a liar (Gen. 3:5). He tempted Christ by misusing scripture (2 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 4:1-11). Satan has preformed *"powerful signs and lying wonders through those who love not the truth those who have pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Th.

2:9-11). Denying or minimizing the consequences of sin has fooled many men and women into choosing sin (Gal. 6:7,8). The little "white lie" is still an effective tool in leading men into darkness. The more truth a lie contains the more dangerous it is (Gal. 1:5; 2 Pet. 3:16). A small Satanic lie can do massive damage. Botulism is an acute food poisoning. The toxin involved is the most powerful biological poison known. Its minimum lethal dose is 0.00003 micrograms per kilogram of body weight of the victim. One authority said, *"That is almost equivalent to having a flea on a freight train which is 100 miles long, and when the flea gets on, it derails the entire train."* Satan's lies are like that. By promising us tomorrow men like Felix are tempted to put off doing what they know is right (Ac. 24:25). Moses was able to recognize the passing pleasures of sin (Heb. 11:25). Today, many do not live long enough to find this out. Temptation motivates you to be bad by promising something good. Remind yourself that the final pain will soon erase the temporary pleasure (Heb. 11:24,25). The Pharisees were deceived by their own sense of self-righteousness (Pr. 12:15).

We must lay aside deceit by seeking the truth (1 Pet. 2:1). Of course you cannot lay aside deceit until you first see that it is a falsehood. Notice the many modern Satanic Lies:

- "Everybody does it"
- "You're just chicken" Calling you a name doesn't make you that thing.
- "You will if you love me".
- "It's your body".
- "It's only harmless fun".
- "I'm just human, and besides, nobody's perfect."

#### ▲ Doubt

Satan tried to put doubt in the mind of Christ. He caused Eve to doubt God's goodness. He attempts to create doubt in us. Tempting us to doubt the Person, power, providence, presence, promises, percepts of God. Is God really there? To doubt the reliability of God's Word, the Bible. To doubt others (1 Cor. 13:5,7). Even to have doubt in ourselves and our salvation.

When doubts arise as they will in all those subject to temptation, we must pray. Christ prayed in the Garden when He was faced with the uncertainty of facing the cross (Mk. 9:24; Lk. 17:5). We must replace doubt with faith (Heb. 11:6).

#### ▲ Discouragement

Never is the temptation of worldliness any stronger than when we feel life has betrayed us. We have bought the modern religionist's creed that God's intention is to make this life comfortable and prosperous. When our life does not reflect this we cry: "it's not fair!" Needed this is true, often life is not fair (Eccl. 9:11). God is not to be tested by how well He delivers your every want. The real test, instead, is how you use your faith to handle disappointments.

These disappointments come in a variety of ways. Through material loss. Job lost 11,500 head of cattle in one day. Later he lost his health, his wife, and the support of his friends. He cried, *"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope"* (Job 7:6). 2) Other great means of discouraging are death (Jn. 11:14); 3) others (1 Th. 5:19); and finally, guilt.

To overcome depression we must lean on Christ. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (Mt. 11:28-30).

#### ▲ Devil's Advocates

False Teachers are one of Satan's greatest assistants. They scratch the itching ears of many (2 Tim. 4:4). Many teach various false doctrines. Countless numbers have been led astray from the truth by various false prophets. Today, the "faith only" doctrine and denominationalism have many believe they are true to God, yet they have been deceived by the Father of all lies. False teachers are so effective because they are crafty like Satan. Jesus warned, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"* (Mt. 7:15).

As Jesus said to Peter, *"Get behind Me Satan"* when Peter tempted Him not to go to Jerusalem to suffer many things, so must we say the same to all temptations. This requires us to beware of the tempter and his tools.

Bobby Leach, an Englishman, startled the world by going over the Niagara Falls in a barrel without suffering serious harm. Some years later he was walking down the street, slipped on an orange peeling, and was taken to the hospital with a badly fractured leg. Some great temptations, which roar around us like Niagara, may leave us unharmed. Yet a little, insignificant incident may cause our downfall simply because we are not looking for it.

Questions:

1. Why does Satan want us to fall in love with this world?
2. What three things does Satan use to get men and women to fall in love with the world?
3. What is hedonism? Give examples of this sin as it is found in the world today.
4. What is materialism? Give examples of this sin as it is found in the world today.
5. What is egotism? Give examples of this sin as it is found in the world today.
6. What is the triumphant triad? How can these be used to counteract the Devil's trident: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?
7. Matching

Lust of the flesh	King Uzziah
	David and Bathsheba
Lust of the eyes	Samson
	Rich Young Ruler
Pride of life	King Nebuchadnezzar
8. List some of the common devices Satan uses to tempt men and women.
9. What are some of the devices used by Satan to deceive man during temptations?
10. How can Christians combat the temptations to doubt?

11. What are some common discouraging things used in Satan's temptations?

12. How are false teachers like wolves in sheep's clothing?

Application & Discussion:

1. How would you answer the following common lies Satan uses in temptations?

"Everyone is doing it."

"God wants to be happy."

"The Devil made me do it."

2. What can you do to help identify false teachers who have disguised themselves as angels of light?

Homework: Question everything.

## Mission Objectives

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Some have suggested that God and Satan are equal in power and are fighting a stand-off battle leaving us poor humans caught in the middle. Yet, God has infinite strength, while Satan is a limited creature. God is "numero uno" (Is. 46:9,10). The fact is God controls the Tempter. So, if this is true then while does God allow us to be tempted? In this lesson we will explore the many reasons why God permits us to be tempted by the Devil.

### To Test Our Faith

Peter tells us that Christians are tempted *"that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* (1 Peter. 1:7).

Why does our faith need to be tested? The reasons are many. Later, Peter informs us that faith is necessary in resisting the Devil (1 Peter 5:9). The shield of faith is needed to extinguish the fiery darts of Satan (Eph. 6:16). Through faith we overcome the world (1 Jn. 5:4) and have confidence that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

When faced with temptation our faith will be proven and improved to be genuine by the fiery trials as gold is purified by the fire heating the gold so the impurities or dross may be eliminated. Mere professors of faith in Jesus fell away at the first sign of temptation and hardship (Lk. 8:13; Jn. 2:19). Even Peter's faith proved to be weak when he was tested while Jesus was on trial (Luke 23:31,32). Merely having faith in Christ is not good enough to withstand the Devil, even the devils have a form of faith in God and Christ (James 2:19).

Various trials can actually be a sign of a healthy faith. They may show that we are still in the faith (2 Cor. 13:6). An old slave constantly repeated the words, "Get thee behind me Satan." His master chided him with "Why is Satan always after you and he never bothers me?" The slave could not answer the question until one day when he and his master were hunting ducks, he made a very interesting observation. In all sincerity he told his master that he had the answer to his question. He said: "You see how we are chasing after the ducks that are trying to get away and not after the dead ducks we have already killed? Well, it must be that way with Satan. No need for him to bother with the ones already dead, he is after the ones trying to get away."

For all the examples which can be found showing those with a weak faith, some trials have shown the great faith of other men and women of the Bible. Abraham's faith was tested and perfected. It stands as an example of the type of faith we should have as Christians. *"And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"* (James 2:23-24). Noah's faith withstood the tests of preparing the ark and was able to save his family for the world wide disaster (Heb. 11:7). Paul kept the faith till the end of his life. *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

### To Engender Humility

Josh Billings once wrote: "The more humble a man is before God, the more he will be exalted; the more humble he is before men, the more he will get rode rough shod." If so who needs it? Evidently we all need humility. It is humility which permits one to follow God's Way (Deut. 8:2,3). The Humble will be delivered in temptation as was Job (22:29). Humility will help us see our sins and confess them. In a parable Jesus contrasted the proud prayer of the Pharisee with the humble prayer of the Publican (Luke 19:13,14). Trials will humble us and help us be victorious over pride. Paul endured the trial of the thorn in the flesh, because it kept him humble. *"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

The proud will not take the blame but project it upon another. Consider the poem by Anna Russell.

I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed.  
 to find out why I killed the cat and blackened my husband's eyes.  
 He laid me on a downy couch to see what he could find.  
 And here is what he dredge up from my subconscious mind;  
 When I was one, my mommy hid my dolly in a trunk.  
 And so it follows naturally that I am always drunk.  
 When I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day,  
 And that is why I suffer now kleptomania.  
 At three, I had the feeling of ambivalence toward my brothers,  
 And so it naturally follows I poisoned all my lovers.  
 But I am happy; now I've learned the lesson this has taught:  
 That everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault.

Trials and temptations force us to face up to who is really responsible. Many however are too proud so they play the "Blame Game." Yet, God knows how to bring down the proud. Paul experienced a trial in his "*thorn in the flesh*." This "negative" condition had a positive effect.

### To Produce Patience

James commanded, "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*" (James 1:2,3). He goes on to show us Job as the perfect example of patience produced under trial. "*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful*" (James 5:7-11). No matter what was thrown at him Job would not give up. While trials produce patience, patience triumphs over the trials. There is nothing more emphasized in the New Testament than the quality of just keeping on whether things go well with us or not. Do not pray that God give you an easy life, but by the trials He can make you a patient Christian. It is by this patience we will save our souls. "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*" (James 1:12).

### To Strengthen Us

Another heavenly fringe benefit of temptations is the strengthening it naturally produces in the hearts of those who overcome. The Hebrew writer tells of the many saints of who "*quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens*" (Heb. 11:34). God has used trials to strengthen men for great positions. Consider David who killed a bear and lion and thus was prepared to kill a giant, run for his life from King Saul and be King of Israel. Although Joseph was sold into Egypt as a slave by his own brothers, then falsely accused by his master's wife and subsequently tossed into prison and forgotten, he emerged from this to be second in command only to Pharaoh. Only through these various trials were they able to become mighty men of God. They knew how to handle the big trials because they were victorious over all the lesser trials of life. As Mark Twain said, "Anyone who has had a bull by the tail knows five of six things more than someone who hasn't." Sometimes experience is the best teacher or trainer.

In ancient folk lore it was believed that the strength of the vanquished passed into the victor. In the Bible, the victor is strengthen by defeating his enemies in the battles of faith. Jesus was tempted by the Devil for forty days in the wilderness and emerged stronger as a result (Matt. 4:1-11). Peter was to strengthen his brethren when he overcame the defeat of temptation (Luke 22:31,32).

While temptation strengthens, strength is needed to overcome temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). Strength is found in the armor we put on before we do battle with Satan (Eph. 6:10). You have heard the saying: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" A bumper sticker once read, "when the going gets tough, the tough go shopping!" The fact is it's "fight or flight." We can choose to handle our problems and find ways to cope or we can run away from reality. Imagine a skilled paddler in his kayak making his way thorough the rocks and hydraulics of the Chattoogo River. As the paddler approaches the next set of rapids, he thinks to himself, I'm tired of paddling.



this is getting old. my arms hurt. My legs hurt. I'm tired of concentrating. However, he can't give up, it's do or die. He has to gather his strength and endure till the end.

## To Purify The Soul

Did you know that pearls are the product of pain. For some unknown reason, the shell of the oyster gets pierced and an alien substance - a grain of sand - slips inside. On the entry of that foreign irritant, all the resources within the tiny, sensitive oyster rush to the spot and begin to release healing fluids that otherwise would have remained dormant. By and by the irritant is covered and the wound is healed with a pearl. Some oyster are never wounded, and those who seek for gems toss them aside, fit only for stew. No wonder our heavenly home has as its entrance pearly gates!

*"The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts"* (Prov. 17:3). Without fiery tests there is no purity. *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 1:6,7). Gold is purified by fire. You get rid of the alloy and all impurities by putting gold in the crucible and applying great heat to it, and so these other things are removed and the good remains. Trials disclose weakness that need correction. When corrected they leave us purer. "Temptation is the fire that brings up the scum of the heart." We need to think it not strange when fiery trials come but when they don't (1 Peter 4:12). The purification processes must be performed over and over in order for 100% purification to be reached, Ivory soap is advertised as 99.44% pure. We too must strive for perfection. Remember, only the pure in heart will see God (Matt. 5:8) and those who practice pure religion must remain unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

## To Test Our Love

Before marriage love is tested during the engagement period. Love is tested constantly in our relationships with others. More importantly our love is tested in our relationship with Christ and other Christians: 1) to see if we love the world (1 Jn. 2:15; Js. 2:2); 2) to see if we love others (1 Jn. 4:20); 3) to see if we love sin more than we hate it 4) to see if we will obey (1 Jn. 5:3, 2 Cor. 2:9); 5) to see if it is with all the heart (Mt. 22:37) and 6) to see if we will prefer him to all others (Mt. 10:37).

When faced with tests and trials we can forsake the Lord like Demas who loved the present work (2 Tim. 4:120). The Rich Young Ruler rejected the tests of discipleship, because he loved his riches more than Christ (Mt. 10:37). Love of the world means the love of God is not in us. How easy is it for us to proclaim love for God, Christ, His Word and the church. Trials put that love to the test. If we overcome our love is greater. If we have true love nothing will separate us from God's Love (Rom. 8:34,36).

Even when we have given in to a temptation, we receive these benefits and more when we become strong enough to overcome.

At school Joe was good in arithmetic, but poor in spelling. Mabel was a fine speller and sat opposite of Joe. On examination day Joe forgot many words, and gave into the temptation to copy several from Mabel. Although the teacher saw him she did not let on because she intended to talk to him after school. Just then the boy was collecting the papers and came to Joe's desk, and she saw him tear his up, and say, "I haven't any!" She knew he had decided to take a zero rather than hand in a dishonest paper. When the school closed she called Joe and said "I saw your struggle, and I am proud of a boy who can conquer temptations." God too is proud of those who can overcome.

We need temptations. Without such we would not be able to mature as Christians. A boy once watched a moth struggling to emerge out of a cocoon in a biology lab at school. Out of mercy he took a knife and cut the cocoon open. The moth was fat and sluggish. Its wings were shriveled up and ugly. The moth over flew away as he had expected. It only died. He explained what happened to the teacher in search of an explanation. The teacher informed the struggle to emerge from the tiny slit in the cocoon was nature's way of squeezing the moth's body and forcing the fluid into its wings allowing it to fly and live. If God were to take away all of life's struggles we would never fly to the heights of heaven.

### Questions:

1. T F God has infinite strength, while Satan is a limited creature.
2. List examples in the Bible of those whose faith withstood the test of trials and temptations.

3. What was the benefit of Paul's "*thorn in the flesh*"?
4. When should brethren consider it all joy? Why?
5. What reward will the Christian receive when he is victorious over temptation? Why will the Lord give it to him?
6. What did Job have to endure (Job 1,2)? How was Job rewarded for his patience (Job 42)?
7. How and for what did the trials Joseph faced early in life strengthen him for the bigger responsibilities later in his life?
8. How are temptations like the purifying of gold?
9. Why is our love for Christ and others tested?
10. T F If we have true love nothing will separate us from God's Love

Application & Discussion:

1. T F A day without something to try my faith is a day of missed and wasted opportunity for spiritual growth. Explain.
2. What are the various ways our pride can hinder our ability to overcome temptations?

Homework: While enduring trials have a joyful attitude through it all.

## Tactics of a Winning Strategy

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No one is immune to temptation. Not by character or spiritual attainment. Our Savior was sinless in character and attained spiritual perfection, yet was tempted. Sonship does not preclude temptation, after all, Jesus was the Son of God. Mere solitude cannot exempt one from temptation. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days. Age will not assist you in avoiding the Tempter. Someone once quipped, "Don't worry about avoiding temptation - as you grow older, it starts avoiding you." Yet, Moses was over eighty when tempted to disobey God.

Since temptations are inevitable, then we are going to have to face them. How well one does when facing the Tempter will be determined by his attitude. Let us consider several such attitudes.

### Rejoice When Tempted

Joy and suffering seem to be opposites, but this paradox is found many times in the Bible (1 Pet. 1:6,7). When the apostles left the Sanhedrin, having been beaten, they went the brethren rejoicing (Ac. 4:41). Paul wrote, "Let us glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3). Suffering persecution is listed by Christ as a beatitude (Mt. 5:10-12). The apostles rejoiced at being imprisoned (Acts 5:41). Paul and Silas having been beaten and cast into a Philippian jail were singing and praying at midnight (Acts 16:25).

There are several good reasons why a joyful attitude helps one confronting temptation. Trials go with wearing the name of Christ. *"But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.... Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter"* (1 Pet. 4:16). It is to be seen as an opportunity to glorify God. To glorify means to show one's appraisal of God to your life. When trials come we are not ashamed but our suffering is a representation of how much we are willing to go through with joy. Temptations also produce endurance in us. *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience"* (Js. 1:2,3). We are to be like the runner joyfully endures pain knowing that it builds endurance. As a matter of fact these tests lead to perfection and completeness. *"But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing"* (Js. 1:4).

This by no means implies that one should go looking for temptation. There is a great deal of difference in rejoicing when you fall into temptation (or testing) and in walking into it deliberately. Paul rejoiced in jail, but did not deliberately try to get put there. Daniel was under no obligation to fall into a den of lions to see if God would protect him, but having been put there, he could rejoice in God's power to deliver, and was stronger for having gone through the ordeal.

### Keep Busy

When faced with temptation get busy, do good works. *"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator"* (1 Pet. 4:19). When faced with trials and temptations by their enemies Nehemiah and the Jews with him simply got busy. The result of their efforts not only helped them overcome temptation, but also allowed them to finish building the walls of Jerusalem in a mere fifty-two days. The fact of the matter is our faithful Creator, created us to do good works, not to give into temptations (Eph. 2:10). We will either work for God or work for the Devil (Mt. 12:30). The choice is ours.

If you stay busy you will stay out of trouble. If David had been out on the battlefield with the rest of the men of Israel, he may have avoided the temptation of Bathsheba. Samson should have been busy saving his fellow Israelites from the Philistines instead of consorting with these enemies of God's people. Remember, if you are not busy for the Lord, the Devil will find you plenty to do.

### Sing

Paul and Silas were cast into a Philippian jail for preaching the gospel. They were put in stocks. Yet instead of being bitter, they sang and prayed (Ac. 16:25). The end result was they overcame the temptation to quit preaching. Instead a door of opportunity was opened to them after an earthquake freed them and brought them into contact with the jailor. They were not only able to spare his life, but save him and his family's souls by proclaiming to them the plan of salvation.

There are quite a few songs in the hymnals which deal with temptation, such as, "Farther Along", "I Need Thee Every Hour", "Yield not To Temptation", and "Only in Thee" just to name a few. These songs not only teach and reaffirm us, but they encourage us to make melody in your hearts at times when we are most apt to forget that we are Christians and should rejoice in our vocation. Besides many tend to blame God for their trials and temptations. Singing encourages us rather to praise Him.

### Accept God's Chastisement

There are three reasons why God may allow us to be tested as a means of chastisement. First, when we are involved in some kind of wrong doing, we may be afflicted with more trials and temptations that will either entice us to sin further or encourage us to repent. After David sinned with Bathsheba he was further tempted by the fact that she was with child and their adultery would soon be discovered. David could have at that point repented. Instead, he chose to cover up his sin. When that failed he had her husband killed. Next, chastisements also come upon in the form of tests in order to help us grow in Christ. Without these one would not be challenged or know how strong or weak he is in faith. Most children do not like difficult exams. However, these are essential if the child is to be challenged to study and learn and also know how well his education is progressing. Novices are to reject the temptations of their former life and grow by longing for the pure milk of God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2). The third reason is the restraining effect of such trials. When faced with temptation, we may be willing to give into it to please our ego or gratify our fleshing desires. Nonetheless, the consequences of our sins will restrain us from doing so. For example, one may find a convenient opportunity to engage in fornication, yet recognizing the possibility of disease, pregnancy, and shame they are repelled by the temptation. A brother once told me that became involved in a promiscuous lifestyle, but when he was afflicted by a disease his ability to reject the temptation was increased immediately. For these reason the apostle Paul gloried in this thorn in the flesh because it assisted him in staying humble (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

The Hebrew writer lists several fringe benefits of God's discipline. 1) It proves the Father's love (Heb. 12:6); 2) they produce obedience in us (12:9); and we are prompted to share in His holiness (12:11). If we respond properly these afflictions will save us from condemnation.

Albert Einstein once said, "when you sit with a nice girl for two hours, you think its only a minute. But when you sit on a hot stove for a minute, you think it's two hours. That's relatively." So it is with trials and temptation. If we have a negative disposition they will be like a thorn in the flesh. If, however, we view them with a positive attitude, we will be victorious over them.

#### Questions:

1. Give examples of those who rejoiced in trials and temptations?
2. What are some good reasons for rejoicing when faced with trials and temptations?
3. How did Nehemiah and the Jews respond to the trials they faced when trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?
4. How does staying busy help in defeating temptations?

5. Give Bible examples of those who used songs or singing when facing trials and temptations.
6. Find some songs in our song book which would be great to sing when facing trials and temptations.
7. What is chastisement?
8. Why does God test us by chastisement?
9. When faced with the temptation to commit adultery what are some of the consequences one should contemplated? Will this contemplation help keep one from sin? Explain.
10. What are some fringe benefits of God's discipline?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some activities which you engage in which make you more vulnerable to temptation? What are some activities which make you less likely to be tempted or to give into temptation?
2. How do you react or what is our attitude when you believe God is disciplining you for your sins? How should you react?

Homework: When faced with trials and temptations this week count it all joy and sing while keeping busy in the Lord's Work.

# Understanding the Battle

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The various military branches of this country have slogans to motivate young men and women to join. The Army invites them to "Be all you can be." "Join the Navy and see the world." The Air Force is "a great way of life." God also invites us to join His army and "Fight the good fight of faith"; "Be more than conquerors"; "put on the whole army of God" to fight the Devil and this world; and it is a great way to eternal life.

When temptations come as we know they will, we can do one of two things: give in and surrender or stand strong against them.

## The Spiritual Battlefield: The Mind

The greatest battles, and the greatest battlefields for you and me are not to be found on the face of the earth, but rather on the paths of the human heart. The apostle Paul described his battle with sin in these terms: *"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ...I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good"*(Rom. 7:14-17,21).

Alexander Woolcott once said, "all the things I really like to do are either immoral, illegal or fattening." Sinful habits can hold tighter than barnacles to the hull of a ship. We know what we should do; at times we even want to do it; but we cannot find it within ourselves to do what is right. We cannot conquer evil conduct by making New Year's resolutions or giving ourselves lectures on self-control. We must change the mind and enthroned Christ. Our mental faculties must be under new management before our lives change.

Gordon Taylor, in a fascinating book called the *Natural History of the Human Mind*, writes of a man suffering with cancer. The patient, whose case was reported in an English medical journal, told his doctor on Tuesday that there would no point in the doctor's returning on the Thursday following. He was going to die, he said, at 2:30 Wednesday afternoon. The day came and, with his family around him, "at 2:30 precisely, he sighed, raised both hands above his head, smiled, and passed away" (Durham, 49).

The human brain is a powerful organ. It is composed of three sections. It contains perhaps as many as fourteen billion neurons in the cortex alone. It is a marvel of miniature circuitry, electrical activity, chemical compounds and mystifying reactions. And it consumes a third of the body's oxygen supply. Yet, the true marvel of the mind is the power it has in making choices between right and wrong and determining to turn one's think and desires around.

### ♦ Change Your Relationship with Sin

We cannot affect this change on our own. Our mind is not under our own control. I cannot merely say to my mind: "Mind, change." Suppose I wanted an Iron bar to rust I can't say "Iron bar, rust". I can rub salt on it, put it in a humid compartment and wait. It will then rust. There is a process by which we can obtain a renewed heart. God can create a new mind in us (Pr. 51:10) through the power of the Gospel (Rom. 6:17,18). This is accomplished by obeying the command to be baptized (Rom. 6:3-6).

The act of baptism represented death to the old way of life and resurrection to a new way of life. We are "dead" to the power of sin (Rom. 6:1-3,11). He did not mean that the power of sin no longer exists as an influence. The power of sin has access to us but no authority over us. As far as our old life to sin we are dead. Yet, dying to sin is only half the story, we must be alive to God (Rom. 6:10-11; 3-7). To renew something is a two stage process. It involves removing the old and putting on the new, like a mental metamorphosis (Rom. 12:1,2). Also, involved in putting on Christ (Rom. 13:14a). This requires taking off the old man of sin and putting on the new man (Eph. 4:20-24). "You cannot live the way you used to live, for you are not the person you used to be."

### ♦ Change What You Think Upon

You have heard the old saying, "You are what you eat." If that is true, I'm a big bowl of spaghetti. The Bible claims that "you are what you think" (Prov. 23:7). Thus, one of Satan's tricks is to keep our minds off the truth for extended periods of time. He desires us to fill our minds with the rubbish of the world. Christians are to change the affections of the mind by setting their minds on the treasures of heaven (Col. 3:2). To set the affections of the mind

on the earth is to love the world and fall for temptations. We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building a nest in our hair. Temptations will come to mind, but we do not have to yield to them. Where our treasures are is the place where our hearts will be (Mt. 6:20,21).

◆ Change of Conduct Comes Only after a Change of Mind

All of us have had the frustrating experience of feeling convicted over a particular sin, confessing it, and then turning right around and committing it again. It is enough to make us want to pray: "God, if I am destined the rest of my life to fall into temptation, could we at least change the category every once in a while so I will not get completely frustrated?" Perhaps, these temptations keep coming back because we deal with sin like some deal with the weeds in the flower bed. Instead of taking the time to pull them up by the roots, they would simply cut them off at ground level. The flower bed looked good for a while, but in a matter of days the weeds were back, making it just as unsightly as before. When a computer is reprogrammed the programmer "dumps" the old program. In the mind of the Christians: the old program is "dumped" and a new one is out in its place. My first word processing program was called, "PC Write". The next program was a great improvement "Word Perfect 5.0". My performance in using the computer for writing improved greatly. When the new program was installed I had no use for the old program, so it was dumped. To go back to it would have been superfluous.

◆ Change Daily

Someone once confessed, "I used to think that God would deal with me like a grape, taking me all in one bite. But now I know that I am more like an onion and that he is peeling me layer by layer." It will take time for us to become all that God wants us to be. It may take a lifetime.

## Know The Enemy

In understanding the war in which we are often engaged, we must know who our enemy's are. This is part of a winning strategy. General George Patton said that the best way to defeat an enemy is to know their every move, thought, weaknesses, etc. This is how he said he defeated the Desert Fox, Rommel, in North Africa. Douglas MacArthur once said, "The greater the knowledge of the enemy, the greater the potential for victory."

Paul informs us that of who the enemies are in this battle: "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Eph. 6:2).

By knowing our enemies we also understand the nature of this warfare. The Kingdom of Christ is a kingdom not of this world, so it cannot be a war after the nature of this world (Jn. 18:36). Its weapons are not carnal, so the war cannot be of a carnal nature (2 Cor. 10:3). It has spiritual objectives, therefore a spiritual war (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Our opponents are not of the flesh, so the war cannot be against the flesh, but of a spiritual nature (Eph. 6:12). It is called "*the good fight of faith*" not the good fight of the flesh (1 Tim. 1:18,19). The crusaders completely misunderstood, the nature of our warfare.

The chief opponent in this warfare is Satan (Eph. 6:12). He has been our opponent from the beginning, Gen. 3:15. Like a lion, he seeks us out to destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8). He attacked Christ, the Captain of our Salvation (Mt. 4:1-11). He is constantly willing to make war (Rev. 12:17).

Since "*the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*" (1 Jn. 5:19), we are engaged in a battle of cosmic proportions. Although the term "world" does not refer to the cosmos, but to all that is characterized by the materialistic, egotistic, and hedonistic pursuit of the flesh. The world hates us (1 Jn. 3:13). We must overcome the world (1 Jn. 5:4,5).

Part of understanding our enemies is to know the various strategies and weaponry they employ in battle. If you know who the enemy is and how he attacks you are forewarned and forearmed. Paul commands us not to be ignorant of His devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Consider the various tactics Satan has been known in use on the battlefield:

- He mixes truth with error (Gen. 4:4,5; 22).
- He will misquote scripture (Mt. 4:6).
- He will masquerade as an angle of light (2 Cor. 11:4).
- He is a master at hiding spiritual "hand grenades" inside lovely baskets of fruit and flowers (2 Cor. 11:14).
- He will promise that good may come through the practice of evil (Lk. 4:6,7).
- He will attack us through our natural desires (Js. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11).
- He will seek a compromise (Ex. 23:32,33; Jg. 2:1-3).

Do not overestimate your abilities. Battles have been lost because people overestimate their strength. Peter proclaimed to the Lord on the night of betrayal that he would never forsake the Lord, but he did. Paul confessed that he had to buffet himself daily to keep himself under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27).

At the same time do not overestimate the enemy. You can resist the Devil. James commands us, (4:7). David did not overestimate Goliath who stood about ten feet tall, wore 120 lbs of armor and hefted a spear whose head alone weighted more than a sixteen pound bowling ball. Why? Because He trusted in the Lord. The fact that the Devil will flee when resisted shows that he is a coward and a weakling. Satan is hungry for us, but his roar is a bluff. A really dangerous lion stalks its quarry quietly. He pretends to be the king of the jungle, but in reality he is the coward of the forest.

## Do Not Fraternize With The Enemy

During the Civil War an officer could not find his men during a lull in the battle. He discovered that they had all gone out to the enemies camp and were playing cards with the very men that had been shooting at an hour earlier.

Paul warns us of the dangers of too close of an association with those of this world. *"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'"* (1 Cor. 15:33).

Numerous examples can be found of those who were attacked by many temptations because of their evil companions. Solomon's wives turned his heart from God (1 Ki. 11:1-6). The same thing can happen to a Christian when they marry worldly persons in spite of the warning signals. During the trial of Jesus, Peter was intimidated by the company he kept (Mt. 26:69-75). Let us remember that while Peter was warming his hands around the enemies' fire, his heart grew cold and he denied our Lord. Israel was corrupted by the heathen people, they left among them (1 Sam. 8:5,20). Samson was destroyed by his companions, especially Delilah. One should never ask Delilah for a trim. Today, warfare often arises from the opposition of friends or relatives. When it does, we can be forced to choose between good and evil, them or God (Mt. 10:35-36).

The Psalmist tell us that our close association with the worldly can lead to a steady progress deeper and deeper into sin. *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful"* (Psalm 1:1). Not the downward digression. First, "Walking in the counsel of the ungodly". Next, "Standing in the way of sinners". Finally, "Sitting in the seat of the scornful." Fraternizing with the enemy will lead to destruction or morals (1 Cor. 15:33). There's an old saying: "If you sleep with the dogs, you're going to get fleas."

## Positive Influence of Good Companions

In contrast, remember the positive influence of good companions. They can help us to resist evil (Gal. 6:1). Brethren are commanded to *"provoke one another unto love and good works"* (Heb. 10:24). Like the little girl who said of her playmate who had passed away, "It was easier to be good when she was around." God never intended for any of us to function as spiritual lone rangers. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto.

Accountability among brethren will go a long way in helping us fight off these attacks as a fighting unit. Generally speaking, accountability is a willingness to provide an explanation of one's activities, conduct, and fulfillment of assigned responsibility. All of us are accountable to someone in some way. Temptation may be a private thing, but sin rarely is. Everybody needs someone to run to. Someone who will listen, pray, and offer wise counsel when appropriate. You are not the first. Others have walked this road before you. Knowing you are not alone relieves some of the pressure. Sin is not just the responsibility of the people directly affected. Scripture does not teach that our sin is something just between us and God. A woman was married for only a short time when she found out her husband return to practicing homosexuality. *"After I was divorced, several of my friends came to me and said they knew he was gay. When I asked them why they didn't say anything to me, they said, 'We didn't think it was any of our business'"* (Pr. 28:23). The biggest hindrance for men, however, is ego. God calls it pride. We want to handle things ourselves. There is no task too difficult, no mountain too high, no temptation too strong..., and on and on we go. you know the old saying, "Me and God is a majority". No one is a spiritual island. We need one another.

When you join the Lord's Army it is a life time commitment. Battling temptation will be a war that lasts until our last breath on earth (2 Tim. 4:7,8). You may have lost a good many battles, but unless you give up battling temptation you have not lost the war.

The Good News about the war in general is that the Victor has already been determined. Satan started the war (Rev. 12:7-12). Individually we will lose many battles, but God's side will win the war. *"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 'that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.'" And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered*



*together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:17-20).*

Joining the Army of the Lord is like choosing sides after the winning team has already triumphed. Let this be the battle cry of your life: *"The battle is the Lord's"* (1 Sam. 17:47). Let this be our victory song:

"I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield.  
Down by the riverside.  
Ain't gonna study war no more."

Questions:

1. Where is the battlefield of temptation located?
2. How powerful is the human mind? How can this aid one in defeating temptation?
3. When and how does one change their relationship with sin and with God?
4. T F Temptations will come to mind, but we do not have to yield to them.
5. T F If one will first change is conduct, he will then be able to change is mind.
6. How long will it take for one to renew their mind? Is it completed when one has obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation? Explain.
7. What is the nature of our enemies and the nature of this warfare in battling temptation?
8. List some of Satan's battlefield tactics he uses when tempting man to sin.
9. Why should one not overestimate themselves or overestimate the enemy when battling temptation?
10. List examples from the Bible of those who fell into temptation because they were fraternizing with the enemy.

11. Why is it unwise to try to handle all our trials and temptations alone, that is, without the aid of others?

Application & Discussion:

1. List some companions who have a weakening affect on your spiritual life and ability to fight temptations. What can you do about it?
  
2. Who are those companions who aid you in your battle with temptation? What things can you do with others which will strengthen you in the face of trials and temptations?

Homework: Enlist the aid of a spiritually-minded friend to assist you this week in fighting temptation.

## Dressing for Battle

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We have different clothes for every occasion. We have clothes for work. Clothes to for relaxation. Clothes to wear for going out on the town. We have exercise clothes. Clothes for weddings, formals, parties, dates, hiking, swimming, Try to find the mother of the bride wearing hiking boots at her daughter's wedding. Would a soldier go into battle without first getting dressed for it? Would you think of finding a soldier wearing an evening gown in a war zone (unless of course you are watching an old episode of M.A.S.H.) We talked about how easy it is to forget that we are in a war.

We are told to dress for success. To be more fashion conscious. You can even buy designer clothes for babies, and I'm sure the babies appreciate it! Being a Christian is not a dress parade, but soldiers wounded and crawling through the mud engaging the enemy whenever encountered. Christians also need to dress for success and Paul tells us what they are to wear in Ephesians 6:13-17.

In this text, Paul is referring to the armor of the Roman soldier. Writing to the Romans and Greeks, Paul used those illustrations with which the people were familiar. Paul saw many Roman soldiers in his lifetime. A centurion escorted him to Rome (Ac. 27:1) and during his two-year imprisonment there, he was guarded by a Roman soldier (Ac. 28:16). A Roman soldier would not dream of going into battle without every piece of equipment secured and ready for action. An unprepared soldier will suffer in a spiritual war as well.

This armor is necessary because temptations are Satan's weapons used against us in battle. He has had several thousand years to refine and become greater skilled in their use. We need help or we will never overcome. Patriot missiles were developed and deployed to defend against Scud missiles that the enemy fired during the first Middle East war. By knowing the weapons of our enemy, we are able to prepare weapons to defend against his.

### Necessity Of Putting On The Whole Armor Of God

Paul did not say "research each piece of Roman armor alluded to in these verses." Instead Paul said, "Put it on!" No successful warrior ever attacked and then asked for his shield and sword. No successful soldier ever went into battle with only a helmet or only a sword, etc. Satan is too powerful for us. His allies are many (Eph. 6:12). Satan's strategy is to waste us. God's armor is the equalizer. It is going to take the strength of the Lord, His spiritual armor, and everything we can do to make a stand.

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-13).*

Consider the nature of God's Armor. It is called the armor of God, Eph. 6:11); 2) the armor of light (Rom. 13:12); and 3) the armor of righteousness (2 Cor. 6:7). It is not carnal, but spiritual (2 Cor. 10:4).

»» Choose Spiritual instead of Carnal Armor

Putting on armor is preparation for a fight. It is the only armor that will enable us to defeat the enemy. David had not tested Saul's armor, so he would not use it in his battle with Goliath (1 Sam. 17:38). Today we need to beware of putting our trust in a physical weapon to help us win a spiritual victory. To allow ourselves to be thus misguided would be like trying to win a naval victory with trucks and tanks or like trying to win a football game with tennis balls. Remember, Paul's enemies at Corinth had resorted to carnal weapons in their attempt to discredit him. Paul was willing to defend his apostolic work, but not with the use of carnal tactics. Note, while making the comparison of God's armor to that of the Roman soldier's, Paul was in no way showing approval of carnal warfare. The soldier of the Lord has beaten his sword into a plowshare and his spear into a pruning hook (Is. 2:4).

»» Check for Cracks in Your Armor

King Ahab determined in the confidence of his earthly power to fight the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead, and four hundred false prophets encouraged him with words and demonstrations. However, his ally, King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked for a true prophet to reveal the will of Jehovah, the God of Israel's battles. God

warned that death awaited Ahab, if he went to fight against the Syrians. King Ahab disguised himself, thinking that he could avoid the consequence of that truth. This effort failed, *"a certain man (of the Syrian Army) drew his bow, and with a random shot struck the King of Israel between the Joints of his armor"* (1 Ki. 22:34).

A recurring plot in war novels as well as recent science fiction movies has been that of the supposedly impregnable military complex or battleship. As the story moves toward its climax, someone discovers the Achilles' heel. Such was the plot of *Star Wars*. A gap in the armor or a overlooked defense has been the down fall of many Christians. Our armor needs to be put on, checked and inventoried every day. Just as every soldier is required to keep his weapons and clothing in good repair, so it can be used effectively when needed in battle. So, do a checkup on your own spiritual armor. If part of it is a little rusty from disuse, start "polishing" the neglected area now. Like a good soldier, God would have us wear the complete armour.

## Components Of God's Armor

### ➤ The Belt of Truth

*"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth..."* (Eph. 6:14a). The Roman soldier's belt was more like an apron than a belt. It was made of thick leather and covered his abdominal region. It was used to grid up the skirts of one's robes about his mid section and groin to insure that he would not be impeded in marching and fighting. Furthermore, it served as a stay to his spine in the arduous task. The loins are weak, but strengthened with the belt. It was sign of a soldier on active duty. First in importance. Today, stockers in stores are required to wear protective belts while working.

Spiritually, this belt represents a person's truthfulness or integrity. It shows that he is real and genuine. Demonstrating that the soldier of God must be real or genuine. What do we mean by this idea? In God's army we must be more than pretend Christians. Truthfulness and sincerity give strength to our weaknesses.

The girding the loins was referred to as: courage (Job. 38:3); preparation (1 Pet. 1:13); and urgency (2 Ki. 4:29).

As the belt had hooks to hold other parts of the armor together, so Truth holds the whole armor together. The foundation of our fight, from the beginning truth could have defeated temptation. Note, Satan and the wicked are devoid of Truth (Jn. 8:44; 1 Tim. 6:5).

### ➤ The Breastplate of Righteousness

*"Having put on the breastplate of righteousness"* (Eph. 6:14b). The breastplate was made of metal plates or chains. It covered the body from the neck to the waist, front and back, to protect all the vital organs.

Our righteousness is not self-righteousness, but that righteousness which comes from God (Rom. 5:17). When Jesus came to be baptized by John the Baptist He said that He must do that to fulfill all righteousness (Mt. 3:13-17). God said be baptized! Jesus also put on the breastplate on as He did no sin (Heb. 4:15). If God said it was the right thing to do, He did it.

It is the part of the armor the enemy sees. Shows our good conduct before the world which the enemy does not have (1 Jn. 3:7,10). Righteousness of the Christian is shown to the enemy. It is the show of our conduct, behavior, and uprightness (1 Jn. 3:17).

Righteousness is said to make us bold as a lion (Pr. 28:1). Someone who is right and knows it (1 Jn. 2:3-6) and possesses confidence and assurance which is grounded in the Word of God. Abraham's belief of God was demonstrated in that he did what God said for him to do (Rom. 4:3).

In ancient days, men believed the emotions resided somewhere in a person's chest. So often temptation begins with our emotions. We must keep our emotions in check.

### ➤ The Shoes of the Gospel

*"And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* (Eph. 6:15). The ancient warrior of Rome wore sandals with heavy studs in the soles for better footing. This provided for greater mobility in battle. Metal plates covered the lower part of the legs for added protection.

In the spiritual war these shoes bring peace. The carnal soldier brought death, but we bring the peace of the good news of eternal life. The shoe is associated with peace because that is what we are to leave everywhere we go, much like a foot print. Furthermore, we follow the Captain of our Salvation is the Prince of peace.

The Gospel is the source of peace. As might Crusaders we are carrying out our marching orders to the world (Mk. 16:15). Our marching orders say, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel..."* (Mk. 16:15). Foot soldiers are necessary, we are needed to carry out our marching orders. The Gospel is the message to bring peace between God and man and man and man, The saved will have peace with God and his fellow man.

Shoes make our travel easier. The gospel of peace prepares us to walk through the narrow gate and up the straightened way (Mt. 7:13,14). We need our shoes because it is a hard road to walk. By way of contrast our

enemy has no peace or good news - the enemy is barefoot.

»»» The Shield of Faith

*"Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one"* (Eph. 6:16). The word translated "shield" comes from the word that meant "door". In fact, some of these shields were almost as big as doors. The shield of the ancient soldier was four feet by two feet, made of wood and covered with tough leather. The edges were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock their shields and advance into the enemy ranks.

The wood worked to extinguish the flame of the fiery darts. Christians need it to protect them from Satan's fiery darts. Ofttimes soldiers would dip their arrows in tar or some other flammable substance and ignite them. Missiles hurled by hand, such as, three foot iron shafts with fur soaked in pitch. These darts are temptations and persecutions used to destroy our belief and trust in God. With faith we can quench everything the enemy can shoot. If an arrow were to strike a soldier, his breastplate would stop the arrow from piercing him, but the pitch would fly off the arrow and set the soldier on fire. Darts are sharp objects used to penetrate deep and destroy. Satan's fiery darts are capable of piercing us through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10). Faith will shield us from both the burning and penetrating nature of Satan's attacks. Faith extinguishes Satan's lies, doubts, discouragements, fear, persecutions, etc.

Faith is the victory by which we can overcome anything the world throws at us. *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith"* (1 Jn. 5:4). Therefore, stand behind the shield of faith in the face of every weapon that might tend to cause us fear.

Faith is one's complete trust and belief in the promises and power of God. It is taking God at His Word. Many soldiers have gone into battle half-hearted and fearful, because they did not trust the orders and wisdom of their commanding officers. Our God who is omnipresent, omnipotent; and omniscient.

Fortify Your FAITH to STAND. We are to *"resist him, steadfast in the faith,..."* (1 Pet. 5:9). Many Christians of the first century were commanded to make an offering of incense to show their loyalty to Caesar. Polycarp was able to resist even though he faced death. The Roman army captain asked: "What harm will it do to say 'Lord Caesar', and to offer sacrifice, and be saved?" Polycarp replied: "If you vainly suppose that I will swear by the spirit of Caesar, listen plainly, I am a Christian."

Although the devils believe they have no active, working faith (Js. 2:17).

»»» The Helmet of Salvation

*"And take the helmet of salvation,..."* (Eph. 6:17a). With a helmet the soldier is now protected from head to foot. The Roman helmet was leather and metal adorned with a horsehair crest, with a visor to protect the face.

The head represents our mind. The mind is where most of our battles were won or lost. That is where the ultimate decision is made as to whether or not we will obey. We are saved from temptation when we choose with our minds to be obedient.

Salvation is the gift of God's grace. We are told to "take" the helmet of salvation. "Take" in this verse translates a different Greek word than that translated "take" in verses 13-16. The Greek word emphasizes the idea of receiving rather than actively reaching out to grasp hold of a gift. Acts 8:14 talks of Samaria receiving the word which was done by Philip's preaching. In Acts 17:10-12, we read of how Berea received the word, ...grace of God. We must reach out to accept the good things that God is offering to us in Christ.

This helmet represents our hope of salvation. The protection of our eternal inheritance, our reward, our victory. It is the anchor that keeps us sure and steadfast. First having salvation clears our conscience. Receiving salvation gives us an anchored soul according to Hebrews 6:19,20. Which soldier is going to fight the best? One that knows where he is and why he is there, or is it the one that is just skipping around with no clear mission? The Christian soldier knows that one day this helmet of salvation is to be replaced by a crown (Js. 1:12).

Again, the enemy has not such helmet in his arsenal. There is no salvation for the enemy (Mt. 25:41).

»»» The Sword of the Spirit

*"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;"* (Eph. 6:17b). The sword of God's Armor is God's powerful Word. *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12).

It is our only offensive weapon, yet it is the only one we need. With it Christ defeated Satan. Because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is perfect and flawless. It is a very powerful weapon. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The word "powerful" is from the Greek word *dunamis* from whence we derive our English word "dynamite." This spiritual sword can either cut (Acts 7) or prick (Acts 2).

Every good swordsman knows that practice is a must. Swordsmanship must constantly and diligently be worked at (2 Tim. 2:15). A soldier is never wasting his time just while sharpening his sword. Timothy was told to give himself to *"reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"* (1 Tim. 4:13).

Satan has nothing in his scabbard or quiver to match the Word of God, but a feeble imitation of the real thing.

#### Summary

The enemy cannot withstand an assault by a Christian wearing the whole armor of God. An Indian warrior sat intently studying a revolver. The revolver had been captured from the white soldiers he fought against. He inspected the pieces of molded steel and examined the intricate mechanisms of the pistol. He marveled at the workmanship and resources necessary to make such a weapon. As time passed his pose became one of dejection. For the first time it dawned on him that they would not defeat the white man. His tribe could not produce even one such weapon while the white man made them without number. This warrior sadly realized that he was fighting against an enemy with creative resources which he could not match or even fully comprehend.

Our enemy cannot win in a battle with a Christian wearing the Whole Armor of God. Satan and his hoards have no girdle of truth, helmet of salvation, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace; shield of faith or sword of the Spirit.

#### Questions:

1. T F Christian soldiers need to dress for success.
2. What is the nature and source of the Christian's armor?
3. What are carnal weapons? Why are they so ineffective in a spiritual conflict?
4. Why should Christians examine their armor every day?
5. To what else is the girding of the loins referring to in scripture?
6. Why does the Christian soldier's shoes bring peace?
7. What will faith enable the Christian soldier to do?
8. Why is salvation connected with the protection of the head by a helmet?
9. How does a Christian practice and improve his swordsmanship?

10. Matching the Components of God's Armor

Belt of Truth	Word of God
Shoes of the Gospel	Protects from the fiery darts of the Devil
Breastplate of Righteousness	Protecting and doing what is right
Shield of Faith	Protecting the hope of salvation
Helmet of Salvation	Integrity and God's Word as the foundation
Sword of the Spirit	Bringing peace through the Good News of Salvation

Application & Discussion:

1. Explain why our spiritual enemies have no belts, shoes, breastplates, shields, helmets or swords.
2. What are some of the fiery darts which the Devil hurls at you in trials and temptations?

Homework: If you wish to be victorious in the daily battles with temptation, make it a habit of putting on the armor of God every morning this week before you get out of bed. Lie there in bed, putting on the armor piece by piece and thinking through the significance of each piece. Remember, your battles begin the moment you wake up each morning.

# Preparing for Battle

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In A.D. 70 the Roman armies were camped around Jerusalem. The siege was part of the most dramatic battle of the world history. Even with eighty thousand soldiers, Titus was unable to take the city because of its strong walls and determined defenders. They had begun their defense of Jerusalem long before the Roman army arrived. A general whose task it is to defend a city against attack does not wait until the city is being besieged to plan his defense. A wise general plans his defense strategy long before the threat of attack even presents itself. "How will the enemy attack? From which direction will they approach? Where are our weak spots?" In World War 2 the D-Day invasion took many months of planning and preparation.

In this lesson, let's consider several things we can do in preparation for battling the temptations of the Devil.

## Communicate With Headquarters

During the invasion of the tiny island of Grenada a situation took place which clearly demonstrates the importance of communicating with Headquarters during a battle. A unit of American soldiers were being penned down along a road by enemy fire from the top of a near-by building. When they tried to radio for assistance the soldier carrying the equipment noticed that it would not function. Seeing a telephone booth nearby one of the soldiers dashed into it whipped out his telephone charge card and called his home base in Georgia. He told them where they were and what they needed. The base in Georgia radioed the field commanders in Grenada. A few minutes later a C-130 gun ship flew over the building and silenced the enemy fire. The young man who used his head to get through to HQ at a crucial moment received a medal for his heroism.

### ☛ Christ's Example

Christ was constantly communicating with his Father, so he could overcome temptations. Although His ministry was relatively short He was faced with much opposition and temptations. One can trace Christ's prayer life throughout His ministry. He prayed when He went into the desert (Lk. 4:1,2); when He overcame temptation (4:13-15) when He withdrew to a lonely place to pray (Lk. 5:16); when He healed the sick before the pharisees (vv. 16,17); when He went into the hills and spent the night praying before choosing the twelve (Lk. 6:12,13); when He went into the mountains and prayed all night (Lk. 9:28,37) giving Him the strength to rebuke the evil spirit and healed the boy (vv. 38-43); and when He prayed in private (Lk. 9:18); when He prayed for himself and disciples because He was soon to be betrayed and they were to be scattered (Jn. 17; 18:1-8); and when He prayed on the cross (Lk. 23:34,46); the final battle from which He arose victoriously.

Indeed, Jesus demonstrated that the best way to fight against sin is to fight it on your knees (Ps. 119:29,36; 19:13; Mk. 9:24).

### ☛ Necessity and Power of Prayer

Interestingly, right after the soldier of Christ is commanded to put on the whole armor of God he is commanded to give himself to prayer. *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--"* (Eph. 6:18,19). Surely a soldier of Christ must put on his radio and be ever ready to communicate with His heavenly headquarters else he is not fully dressed for battle.

We must be constant in prayer. We are to pray *"with all prayer and supplication."* After the soldier has prayed he must keep on praying.

We must pray in the Spirit, that is, in harmony with the instructions the Spirit has provided. As Jesus prayed, *"Thy will be done"*

If we were going to war, we would not pray just for ourselves, but for the whole army. Many times intercession needs to be made on behalf of fellow soldiers who need our additional prayers or have stopped praying.

We are to make supplication to God. Supplication means a request for supplies. Christians need supplies to live on earth and fight the good fight (1 Tim. 2:1,2). Prayer is needed to request help as Jesus did for Peter (Lk. 22:32) or for deliverance (2 Pet. 2:9). We need to be supplied with wisdom (Js. 1:5).

Prayer is also a necessity for those seeking to avoid temptations. *"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."* (Mt. 6:13).



Sandwiched between petition for forgiveness and petition to be delivered from evil. Not that God never tests us or that we are never tempted by the evil one. It is to petition God how controls temptation and trials, so that we do not go back into the same sin we were forgiven of and thus be delivered from evil. Unlike real war we need to avoid the enemy when possible. Jesus ordered the three disciples to pray *"that ye enter not into temptation"* (Mt. 26:41).

A driver tucked this note under the windshield wiper of his automobile. "I've circled the block for twenty minutes. I'm late for an appointment, and if I don't park here I'll lose my job. 'Forgive us our trespasses.'" When he came back he found a parking ticket and this note: "I've circled the block for twenty years, and if I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

As in any battle the best of soldiers can find themselves overwhelmed and outnumbered and need to call for reinforcements. In this world where so many have been overcome by sin and need to be rescued by soldiers of Christ, Jesus commands us to prayer for reinforcements *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'"* (Mt. 9:36-38).

Before going to war Israel consulted the Lord (Jg. 1:1; 20:27,28). No soldier should think himself prepared to face the enemy without first consulting headquarters. Christians are not ready until they have established and are prepared to maintain the lines of communication with God in prayer.

## Memorize The Battle Plan

The Gospel Plan of Salvation is the battle plan. It encompasses more than just the five simple steps for an alien sinner to go from being lost to saved. The plan is the sum total of all God requires of us throughout life. Many however, reject God's Will *"and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Remember, It is one thing to know God's plan, it is another thing to put it to use. Adam and Eve knew God's will but did not follow it. Nadab and Abihu had been informed where to get the fire to burn incense, but choose to reject God's desire (Lev. 10:1-3). God had clearly informed King Saul of the Divine objects in the battle with the Amalekites, yet Saul still disobeyed (1 Sam. 15:3, 21-24).

For every example of those who failed to obey orders we have a story of those who remembered to follow the battle plans. Joseph responded to the advances of Potiphar's wife with *"how than can I do this great wickedness and sin against God"* (Gen. 39:9). When Satan tempted Jesus, He responded, *"It is written"* (Mt 4:1-11). King David overcame because he meditated upon the words of the Lord. *"Consider my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget Your law ....Many are my persecutors and my enemies, yet I do not turn from Your testimonies."* (Ps. 119:153, 157).

### ☺ Memorize Scriptures

Why not commit various Bible passages to memory, after Jesus did. The psalmist believed you could be victorious through the memorized Word. *"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!"* (Ps. 119:9-11).

Some lament "I can't memorize Scripture." This is not true! We memorize things all the time. Imagine that tomorrow the best-looking girl (guy) in your school (or a guy if he's talking to girls ) walks up to you and asks you over to dinner. I would love for you to come. Here's a map. Be there at 7:00. It's the messiest thing you've ever seen in your life. You can't tell which way is up. How many of you guys would say, "Too bad, I can't understand the map. I guess I won't go"? We do what we want to do. Still some are just too lazy to fill the arsenal of their minds with those truths needed to combat the lies of the enemy.

Some verses are so familiar that they come to your mind without any conscious effort on your part. We must select verses that focus on the areas in which you are most tempted. All of us should have a verse on hand for gossip. Passages that teach the plan of salvation should be ready for those who ask concerning our hope (1 Pet. 3:15). To guarantee that these verses become part of your long-term memory one only needs to review them regularly. Use index cards to carry with you. Think about it this way. If you memorize one verse a week for a year, and even skip two weeks for vacation, that is FIFTY verses. Personalizing Scripture makes it come alive. Substitute your name or a personal pronoun for pronouns such as "you" and "we." Speaking the truth aloud is important. Jesus did it. It makes the Tempter real.

Memorizing scripture is not the ultimate goal. It is just a means to an end. Howard Hendricks tells a humorous story about a kid in his church who had memorized the entire New Testament. He could quote the text and he knew the references as well. Hendricks says you could say to this kid, "Eph. 4:9", and he would start right

there and keep right on going. But it was discovered later that he was stealing from the collection plate.

## Set A Watch

In the days of the Vietnam war, recruits attended a training session called, "Combat Orientation: Southeast Asia." During these sessions soldiers were informed: "Don't ever underestimate the enemy and overestimate yourself. And, remember, the enemy in Vietnam is not the conventional enemy of history. The enemy will use any tactic he can think of. He will try to move in your direction and destroy you through any possible means. He may show up anywhere, at any time or place. In other words, the combat zone is unlimited!"

Christians are commanded to be watchful. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). Jesus told his three disciples to watch and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed. *"Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.' He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.' Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?'"* (Mt. 26:38,40). We must watch as we pray - keeping alert [Note: "watching" and "praying" are often linked in the scriptures (1 Pet. 5:8; Ac. 20:31; 1 Th. 5:1-8)]. When Nehemiah and the Jews trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem they set a watch (Neh. 4:9). *"None of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon in his hand"* (Neh. 4:23). They finished the walls of Jerusalem in a mere fifty days and thus thwarted their enemies. We need a watchman for the night as well as a guardian for the day. Don't set yourself up for an ambush. Watch out day and night for the Devil's attacks.

Death was often the sentence throughout history for the soldier who fell asleep on his watch (Mt. 28:13,14). Remember though, a lion will devour a sleeping victim before he will choose a fight. The "sleeping" Christian is unaware that Satan is near and unprepared to meet the unexpected temptation. Satan is looking out for the Christians who are not looking out for him. Soldiers of Christ are not to *"give place to the devil"* (Eph. 4:27). The word *"place"* is from *topos* (Gk.) meaning "1. prop. any portion of space marked off, as it were, from surrounding space" (Thayer, p. 628). Metaphorically, "Opportunity, power, occasion for acting." Allowing the Devil an "opportunity, power, or occasion for acting." We do not leave the keys in our cars inviting thieves to steal. No one would go to bed at night with a mass murderer in his guest room. Perception is the first defense of the Christian. You cannot defend yourself against an attack if you do not see it coming. Indeed, to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

## Summary

On May 25, 1940, a British brigade was trapped in the French city of Calais. It was commanded by Brigadier C.G.G. Nicholson. His government had informed him that his command would not be evacuated and that they must fight on to the end. The Germans sent him a demand for his surrender. Brigadier Nicholson bravely replied: "The answer is no, as it is the British Army's duty to fight as well as it is the German's." Christians must never surrender, be prepared to fight the enemy to the bitter end.

Are you prepared for this great spiritual battle? First, thing to consider is: "Have I enlisted in God's Army?" A lesson is to be learned in the following Associated Press report: "An Army spokesman said Friday that 15 year old Walter Lee Martin is not recognized as a soldier - despite two periods of serving in Vietnam, because he did not enlist, was not drafted and did not enter the army through any regular means. 'He was not officially in, did not officially enlist or enter through any normal means,' Darrante said. 'He was, in fact, not a soldier. he isn't a soldier.' Two periods of service in Vietnam, twice wounded in action; yet no purple hearts, no honorable discharge, no veteran's benefits; he did not legally enlist. Anyone can enlist in the army of the Lord if he is willing to meet the requirements: hear, believe, repent, confess and have his sins washed away in baptism.

## Questions:

1. When should the Christian start preparing himself for battling temptations?
2. At what important events in the life of Christ did He pray?
3. What is praying in the Spirit?

4. What supplies does a Christian need from God to fight temptation?
5. Who defeated the temptations of the Devil through the scriptures he memorized?
6. Give examples of those who rejected God's plan or will and therefore succumbed to temptation.
7. T F Memorizing scripture is just too difficult for most Christians.
8. Why did Jesus command the three disciples with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane to watch and pray?
9. What has been a common punishment for a soldier who falls asleep on his watch? What can happen to the Christian who fails to be vigilant?
10. How does one enlist in the army of God to become a soldier of Christ?

Application & Discussion:

1. What should you pray when faced with temptation?
2. List some various passages you could memorized to aid you in resisting temptation.

Homework: Start memorizing important scriptures this week to aid in defending yourself against temptations.

# Waging Battle

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Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, was truly impressed with military discipline. He claims soldiers always carried their weapons with them, even in time of peace. Furthermore, practice in the proper use of their weapons never ceased. On the other hand failure of soldiers to be properly disciplined resulted in the fall of the Roman Empire. Gibbon wrote, *"The relaxation of discipline, and the desire of exercise rendered the soldiers less able, and less willing, to support the fatigues of service"* (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 3, p. 271).

The Gospel is still being preached today while the Roman Empire and the pagan gods are completely destroyed. Yet, the war is not over, Christians must continue to wage the battle. One of the most successful method of propaganda is to inform the enemy that the war is over, and to lay down their weapons. Many Christians have stopped waging war with the enemy. The fact is there is the war is never over. As long as we live on this earth we must fight the good fight of faith.

## March Beneath The Banner Of The Cross

### ⇒ Avoid Marching to Close to the Edge

In Proverbs 7, Solomon describes a foolish young man who is seduced by a woman of easy virtue. *"A young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to his house"* Surely, he was not on her street accidentally. He was much like the young boy who, having been warned by his father not to swim in a certain stream, came home one day trying to conceal his wet swimsuit. "Why did you disobey me?" his father asked him. "I didn't mean to, but I was suddenly tempted," the boy said. "But why did you have your swimsuit with you?" the father continued. "Oh," the boy answered "I took it along just in case I was tempted." It makes no sense to put your head in the lion's mouth. Husbands and wives do it by developing a too easy and carefree relationship with friends of the opposite sex. Preachers do it by carelessly counseling women alone in private. "But I'm not doing anything wrong." As long as we are on the right side of things, we feel as if everything is all right. And should someone try to warn us about something, we may become defensive and say, "I'm not doing anything wrong! The Bible doesn't say anything about this." That is to move as close to the line of sin as we can without actually sinning. Like going 50 in a 45 mile-per-hour speed zone.

"How far can my girlfriend and I go without committing the sin of fornication?" They are like many who wish to camp out right on the line between "righteous living" and sinfulness? Unfortunately there will never to an agreed-upon answer for these "grey areas." The Bible doesn't address itself to question of how far a person can go toward sin without actually sinning. Instead the Bible commands us to "flee fornication" and "flee youthful lusts". It doesn't say, "get as close to youthful lusts as possible, but don't sin". If we develop lifestyles close to the edge Satan will come along and give us a little push over into sin.

### ⇒ Marching Wisely

All Armies move, but the one which can move wisely and logically will be more effective in battle. Mobility is the key to victory. Thus, God's soldiers have been commanded to *"see then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise"* (Eph. 5:15).

When we are faced with decisions about opportunities, invitations, vacations, gifts, movies, music, books, magazines, videos, dates, websites or anything else that pertains to our daily lives, we should not be asking, "What's wrong with this?" Instead we should be asking, "what is the wise thing to do?"

Right after teenagers have a big argument with their parents, they are usually more prone to do things they would normally not do. Like be extra rebellious and take their first drink. When a man experiences a great deal of success, he sometimes feels as if he owes it to himself to take some extra liberties. They approach every opportunity, invitation, and relationship in light of their present state of mind and feelings.

Remember, we are marching through enemy occupied territory. Land mines are everywhere. Thus, you must "walk circumspectly".

### ⇒ Marching Daily

As the Israelites marched through the wilderness, they had manna every day. Mrs. Moses' cookbook surely had a special section on "A Thousand and One Ways to Fix Manna". What potatoes are to Idaho, pineapples are

to Hawaii, corn to Iowa, so manna was to the wandering Hebrews for forty weary years (Ex. 16:35). When everyone came in to eat, they didn't ask, "what's for supper?" but, "How'd you fix it this time?". God called it "food from heaven... the bread of angels" (Ps. 78:34,35). Exodus 16:4 provides additional insight often overlooked: "every day, that I may test them..." The hardest thing about life is that it's so daily. As a soldier of Christ everywhere you go you are subject to the marching orders of God.

#### ➡ Marching on to Zion

The Christian does not march as one who sits in the rocking chair, moving back and forth but never getting anywhere. We are marching on to Zion. Wisdom always considers the future, which includes plans, goals, and dreams. The clearer our goals are, the easier it becomes to say no to temptation. "This won't hurt a bit!" Every sin hurts; Goal-oriented people are more apt to view present decisions in light of future consequences. A young girl who has purposed in her heart to keep herself morally pure for the man she will eventually marry will have more resolve when she is alone with him and passions begin to heat up. Christians don't wake up one morning and just out of the blue decide to go out and have an affair. Families don't plan to go into debt up to their ears. Married couples do not start out planning somewhere down the road to get divorced. Decide from the beginning to keep your eyes on the direction of your march and you will not let the enemy turn you away from your objective.

## Knowing When To Advance And Retreat

#### ➡ Discerning When to Advance

When General Douglas MacArthur was called home from Korea, he reminded Congress that "war's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision." We cannot be interested in merely "holding our own," we must be on the offensive. The Christianity is not a system of pacifism. Neutrality is out of the question. Christ did not come and die on the cross so we can become an army of passive believers. After all, faith without works is dead and so are soldiers of Christ.

The Gospel of Christ is an aggressive, militant Gospel. Jesus warned, "*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad*" (Mt. 12:30). Our Christianity is not only defensive, but it is also aggressive. We must pursue the enemy; we must follow him right into the stronghold. Three times in Ephesians six we are told to "stand". To make such a stand requires a militant mentality.

A river-boat captain was once approached by a man running illegal goods on the river. The man offered the captain a sum of money if he would take his boat to the shore to pick up a load of contraband. The Captain refused. The offer was doubled. The captain then drew his pistol, leveled it at the man's head, cocked it and said, "Every man has his price, and you're getting too close to mine. Now get off this boat!" (Durham 98).

#### ➡ Perceiving When to Retreat

Use the right resistance. When lust or sensual sins are mentioned in the New Testament, we are told to "flee," to run, to get away. A.J. Gordon wrote, "Avoiding temptation is next in importance to resisting temptation". If you try to tolerate temptation, you will ultimately fall victim to it. Surely, a good run is always better than a bad stand. The Duke of Wellington once said, "The best general is one who knows how to conduct a retreat".

The Bible tells us to retreat from temptation. Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:12). We are commanded to "*flee also youthful lust*" (2 Tim. 2:22); "*flee fornication*" (1 Cor. 6:18); and "*flee from idolatry*" (1 Cor. 10:14b). We are to look for a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Sometimes, "The surest protection against temptation is cowardice" (Mark Twain). "Show it a fine pair of heels. And run for it" (Shakespeare, Henry IV). Many cannot overcome because they are not looking for a way out. The town drunk was converted to Christ in a some western town. He stopped drinking, but kept hitching his horse up at the hitching post in front of the saloon. Soon he was back to his old habits and resumed his role as the town drunk. Sometimes running from temptation is running for your life.

## Enduring Hardship

#### ➡ The Life of a Soldier Is Hard

Whenever we enlist under the banner of Truth, and begin following the Captain of our salvation, we may have to endure some hardness before we share in the final victory. "*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2:3). The word "endure" means "strenuous effort or perseverance." Like a good soldier, God would have us endure hardship. A soldier may be exposed to heat, cold storms, fatiguing marches. The soldier in the field has just one purpose - to satisfy the officer who enlisted him. In the hymn, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, it says the cross "demands my soul, my life, my all". As soldier's life is not one of self indulgence. It is not a life of easy, pampering or comfort. Some soldiers will surrender at the slightest rough going. We please God by not involving ourselves with earthly entanglements. Fighting the good fight even unto death (Phil. 2:5). After all, most Congressional medals of honor are awarded post-mortem.

#### ➡ Showing up for Roll Call

It is 5:00 a.m. The squads are out on the parade ground. The roll is being called. There is an important lecture in a few minutes that all should hear. The sergeant call out, "Where's Private Jones?" "Oh," says Jones' buddy, "Jones was out late last night and did not feel like reveille. He said to tell you he'd try to be here next time." "Okay," says the sergeant, "tell him we'd sure like to have him with us when he feels like it." "Where's Brown?" "Oh, he's playing golf," yelled another soldier. "Said this was the only day he could go golfing." "all right," answered the sergeant. "Where's Smith?" "He said tell you he has trouble getting up this early -- he's still asleep," cries another. "Fine," replies the sergeant. Where's Robinson? "His folks are visiting him," comes the answer, "and they wold feel hurt if he didn't stay to entertain them." "I see", says the sergeant. "Where's Ackerman?" Ackerman's buddy spoke up, "Uh, Sarge, he's mad at something you said in your lecture last week. He told me he wasn't going to come anymore while you were still sergeant." "Sorry to here that," says the sergeant. "Where is Snodgress?" "He has a slight headache," comes a voice, "and thought he wold just hang about the barracks today." "Okay," cries the sergeant. "Is Private Black here?" "No," says a buddy, "he is thinking about moving over to another company; he says this group is not as friendly as it should be." "How about Alexander?" Says one of the men, "Oh, he's quit. He claims you emphasize rules too much." "Has anyone seen Snavely?" "He couldn't find any suitable uniform this morning," answers a friend. "He told me he would be back soon as he had a chance to pick out a decant looking outfit."

Christians need to show up for worship services (Heb. 10:25) and for Bible Studies.

#### ➡ Making Sacrifices for the War Effort

At the start of World War II "the army, numbering 1,600,000 men at the beginning of the year was expanded to nearly 5,000,000. Of these, about 1,000,000 have been scattered around the world in at least 65 strategic spots. ...On the home front, citizens learned how to live in wartime...Many women went into war work. Taxes went up...Rationing went into effect for sugar, coffee, gasoline and fuel oil. More rationing loomed ahead as shortages in meat, canned goods and dairy products developed. Americans learned to walk to save tires, learned to do without many luxuries and 'necessities.' They collected scrap and bought war stamps and bonds. The wartime speed of 35 miles an hour slowed up traffic but helped to speed up the war." "Take good care of that pencil. The WPB [War Production Board] has cut down the production of pens and pencils and asks everyone to take better care of the ones they have. As for erasers- no more are to be manufactured until the war is over....Make a New Year's resolution to make fewer mistakes!" (Current Event, Jan. 4-8, 1943).

During the Gulf War some military personnel were introduced to the hard part of "soldiering." Some had joined the military for educational or monetary opportunities. As soldiers of Christ we must not allow selfish ambitions to hinder our commitment to Christ. *"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier"* (2 Tim. 2:3,4).

If we would be on constant lookout for the enemy. If we would be living as frugally as possible - eating simply, dressing modestly, avoiding unnecessary travel. Just imagine what contributions would be.

If we control the lust of the flesh, we could defeat the devil's efforts (Rom. 6:12). Joseph was in control of his sexual desires during temptation (Gen. 39:7-10). Jesus was in control of His hunger in temptation (Mt. 4:3,4). Job said "I made a covenant with my eyes, 'I will not stare at a girl.'"

## Destroying The Enemy

A city girl always enjoyed fried chicken until she saw her farmer uncle lay a chicken on the chopping block and whack his head off with an ax. Her statement subsequent to that episode was, "I'll never eat another piece of chicken as long as I live." If you want fried chicken, somebody has to kill a chicken. If we desire pure and undefiled religion something has got to go. He who wants to keep his vegetable garden productive does not reserve a plot for weeds. It does very little good to flee temptation if our ties with whatever tempt us are so strong that we make sure we leave a forwarding address. The Israelites were lead into sin because they did not kill the Canaanites, but made a truce. King Saul did not kill all the Amelekites so he and the people were led into sin. Franklin P. Jones put it well, "What makes resisting temptation difficult for many people is that they don't want to discourage it completely".

The great Chicago fire was once so small that a bucket of water could have put it out. So kill it before it spreads. The Bubonic Plague of London during the seventeenth century was wiped out by a fire that destroyed most of the city. Often we do not want to destroy the old way of life. Consequently, we may win a battle and lose a war. We must be dead to the old world and its trespasses and sins.

Once a hunter in need of a fur coat when bear hunting. With a large bear in his sights and his finger on the trigger the hunter stopped because the bear stood up and in a frightened voice said, "Please, don't shot! Just tell me what you want, maybe we can negotiate." The hunter lowered his rifle and said, "All I really want is a fur

coat". The bear replied, "That's negotiable. All I want is a full stomach". So the hunter and the bear sat down to negotiate and a few minutes the bear walked away alone. The bear had a full stomach and the hunter had his fur coat.

Never try to negotiate a treaty with the Devil. Kill the temptation before it is too late.

Questions:

1. What was one of the reasons given for the fall of the Roman Empire?
2. Is one spiritually wise and mature if he sees how close he can get to sin? Explain.
3. What does it mean to "*walk circumspectly*"?
4. What special purpose did God's gift of manna provide for the Israelites?
5. Why does keeping our focus on the goal of Heaven help in defeating temptation?
6. T F Christ did not come and die on the cross, so we can become an army of active and aggressive believers.
7. Show from the Bible where saints are commanded to or were examples of those retreating from temptation.
8. How does showing up for services assist Christians in defeating temptation?
9. What role does self-control play in defeating temptations?

Application & Discussion:

1. List some things a Christian must give up which may not be wrong in and of themselves in order to be a good soldier of Christ.

2. What are some things we can do to kill temptations before they grow to big and powerful?

Homework: Find some things in your life you need to attack aggressively in order to win the battle over temptation. Find other people, places, and things you should flee in order to avoid temptation.



# Reinforcements in the Battle: Divine Assistance in Temptation

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A man in a responsible position, entrusted with large sums of money, was one day tempted to put some of the cash to in his own account. He knew that it would be a long time before his theft could be discovered. He resisted the temptation, but felt that he must tell somebody the anguish of mind through which he had passed. He went, therefore, to the man who had occupied the position before him, and told him all about the temptation, and how he had almost fallen. To his surprise the man did not reprove him, but put his hand on his shoulder in a fatherly sort of way. "I know exactly how you felt," he said quietly. "I went through it all myself when I occupied your position."

It is comforting to have someone who knows what it is like to struggle with temptations and can sympathize with us. When we are tempted we have one who has been there and can listen to us and sympathize with us, and intercede for us.

The purpose of this lesson is to show 1) that the Godhead assists us in overcoming temptation; 2) that victory is in God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:24,25); 3) that part of our work and God's in dealing with temptation (Phil. 2:13); and 4) that God is in control over Satan who tempts us.

## God The Son Manifests The Way To Victory

### ✚ The Sympathy of Jesus

The Son of God knows what it is like to be tempted as a man, *"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"* (Heb. 4:15). There are many who refute the idea of like temptations. One writer has argued Jesus was only tempted from "without" through the flesh and never tempted from any desires "within." A person is not tempted unless he feels an inclination to do a thing. Jesus had the like desires. Jesus had the same lusts or desires as God gives all men (Rom. 8:3). Of Jesus' temptations, E.M. Zerr wrote: "He was here to set an example for His followers who were to be taught the lesson of self-denial. It would have been inconsistent to ask his disciples to resist temptation when they had only their natural powers for support, while He overcame his trials by falling back on his divine power."

To be able to sympathize requires a likeness. Sympathy means a sameness in feelings or emotions, ability to share another's emotions. In contrast, empathy is merely an emotional identification with another. Many will show empathy to one who has just lost a spouse. They do not really know what the widow or widower are going through, because they have never lost a spouse. They are showing empathy. Jesus did not show empathy because of our weaknesses and temptation, but He showed genuine sympathy. To have sympathy means you are like the other person; together in emotions over something. To have empathy means that you identify with what they are going through, but you do not experientially understand. Jesus experienced temptations just like you and I. The Son of God came in the flesh and was tempted in the flesh. While in the garden He told the three to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. He asked that the cup pass from Him. He told them that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

He is our brother in temptation. *"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"* (Heb. 2:17). To become our Brother, *"He emptied himself"* (Phil. 2:5-8), Jesus *"was made a little lower than the angels?"* (Heb. 2:9). This is simply another way of saying that Jesus became a man, *"a partaker of flesh and blood"* (Heb. 2:13). He did not withdraw Himself from "his brethren" - fellowmen - exercising a power that mankind does not have.

Thus, His sympathy is most encouraging when we are tempted. It is always encouraging to talk with one who has gone through what we are going through. Jesus encourages us to pray. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb. 4:16). Enabled Him to deal gently with us. *"He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weakness"* (Heb. 5:2). Christ encourages us to depend on God. *"who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to*

save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Heb. 5:7). The Son of God encourages us to learn obedience: "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (5: 8).

A hymn often song, "Does Jesus Care?" in verse three reads,

*"Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed too resist some temptation strong;  
When for my deep grief I find no relief, Tho' my tears flow all the night long?  
O yes, He cares; I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares."*

#### ✚ The Help of Jesus

When faced with temptation Jesus is able to render aid. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). He is indeed a qualified aid. He knew what it was like to be a baby, growing child, and adolescent, young adult. He knew tiredness, hunger, pain, sickness, cold, heat, etc. Angels came and ministered to him, but they cannot know the setting of temptation that man endures. He is not ashamed to call us brother or sister? Are you afraid to call Him Lord?

Christ aids us in several ways. First, by being our example (1 Pet. 2:21-23). He shows us how to deal with temptation by the example of His sinless life. Also, He promises to provide us. "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." (1 Cor. 10:13). Further, aid comes through hope (Heb. 6:19) and the promises of eternal life (Jn. 3:16).

#### ✚ The Intercession of Jesus

Priests are chosen of those with whom they share the same nature in order to represent the people before the ark of God (Heb. 2:17; 4:15,5:1,2). As our eternal High Priest Christ can perpetually intercede for us.

If Jesus is beyond temptation to sin because He cannot be tempted, He does not share my nature. "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25). While on earth He promised to intercede for Peter as he was about to suffer many temptations. "And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." (Lk. 22:31,32). Peter's sin demonstrates the danger of over confidence. Peter affirmed his loyalty. Christ prophesied that He would fall. Peter didn't think he could fall (1 Cor. 10:12). In the end, Peter did not lose his faith. It was weak. Not because he ceased to believe in Jesus as God's Son, but because he ceased to believe in himself. Thus, I believe Jesus' prayer was answered, and Peter's faith did not fail. How was this possible? "What does the Lord do to give us this day our daily bread?" What else He may provide in the way of providential circumstances, motivational thoughts, surrounding influences, etc., we have no way of knowing. We do not really need to know how he provides these. We do not need to know how Moses' mother and Pharaoh's daughter got to the same spot on the river at the right time in order to appreciate the fact that God can work things for good to those that love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Later, Christ interceded for all in the garden. When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest, He prayed, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (Jn. 17:14,15). Why does the Son of God intercede for those facing temptation?

- Because He knows how powerful prayer is against temptation, Heb. 5:7.
- Because He died for us, Heb. 10:19.
- Because He is our access to God, Eph. 2:16-18; Jn. 14:8.
- Because He is our only mediator, 1 Tim. 2:5.
- Because He is our advocate and comforter, that is, "one who appears on the behalf of another."

### God The Father Regulates Temptation

#### ✚ God Enables Us to Bear Temptation

No temptation comes to man that man does not have the ability to bear up under. "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" (1 Cor. 10:13). Many will say that cannot help yielding because the temptation is too great. Such calls God a liar. God is faithful; He can be trusted. No temptation will be so great that we cannot say "NO!" How? Four

ways come to mind, 1) in response to our prayers (Lk. 22:43); 2) through knowledge (Pr. 24:5); 3) God's grace (2 Cor. 12:10b) and finally, 4) God's providential care (Rom. 8:28).

#### ✚ God Provides a Way of Escape

While living on the Gulf coast in Florida we were threatened by a few hurricanes. "Evacuation Route" were marked to direct residents to safety when a storm threatened. According to 1 Corinthians 10:13 every temptation has an evacuation route. Every temptation has an accompanying escape hatch. There is always an alternative to giving in to temptation. Even when we cannot escape a situation, God always provides a way to escape temptation. Sometimes we do not look for God's way of escape because we do not really want to escape.

Submarines, ships, and planes designed with escape hatches. God provided an escape hatch for Cain. *"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"* (Gen. 4:7). Satan gives us a door to do evil, God gives us a door to do good. Like a game show contestant who has a choice between door #1 or #2. We cry out to the actress in the thriller to make her escape, "don't open the door, run for it." However, they always open the door. Even Lot had a choice not to pitch his tent toward Sodom and not to live in Sodom.

God provides this way of escape due to His loving care and mercy. He wants us to avoid sin. No one has to sin. Adam and Eve never had to eat of the tree. They could have looked for a way out. Some teach that we are born totally depraved and wholly inclined to evil. This promise of God says that sin is a choice.

Our duty is to look for the escape hatch. Consider what 1 Cor. 10:13 does not say. It does not say that God will remove the temptation. It does say that you may be able to endure it. The way is not always an easy escape. Sin is often the easy way out of a situation. It is not marked with a brilliantly lighted exit sign. As a man who was often tempted to steal his neighbor's watermelon explained, "When I pass a watermelon patch, I can't keep my mouth from 'watering', but I can run!" Many of us are like Lot's wife. We are constantly looking back at the temptation. Still others are looking for an excuse to give in rather than a way of escape. Deacons Smith and Jones, two pillars of the church were working in the hayfield on a Virginia farm. Suddenly, Smith called out excitedly: "What is this we've found in this haystack? Look here a jar of liquor." Both of them pondered, and Smith said, gravely: "Brother Jones, we had better drink up this before some poor weak brother finds it and falls by the wayside."

#### ✚ God Does Not Allow Us to Be Tempted Beyond Our Ability

It was due to the efforts of Samuel Plimsoll (1824-98), British reformer, that the merchant Shipping Act of 1876 was passed, requiring all ships to bear a mark known as the Plimsoll Mark and indicating the maximum load line on a ship. By this act the Board of Trade of England was empowered to detain any vessel deemed unsafe, and the amount of cargo was restricted. Thus making the long and perilous ocean voyage of those days much safer. Because of his work, Plimsoll became known as the sailor's friend. The Plimsoll Mark with its graduations and figures, may be seen on the bow of ships near the water line as they lie at anchor in a harbor.

In God's sight, each of us has a similar mark, though we may not be able to see it. The trials and temptations we face may seem unbearable, but He knows our limit, His everlasting arms are underneath, and by His grace we can bear them without sinking. God knows our limitations. God has set a limit on the intensity of every temptation. He has set a limit on the intensity of the temptations you will face. He knows how much you can handle. The Heavenly Father wants us to triumph over not being defeated by temptation. We are to do the resisting and escaping. God will do the adjusting on the testing.

God sets the limitations on Satan. Satan knows our weaknesses and will exploit them if permitted. Remember, Satan had to get "permission" to tempt Peter, and he had to demand it (Lk. 22:31-32). Before Satan could go after Peter, he first had to check it out with God. We are not at his mercy as some would have us believe. Satan, like all creatures, is ultimately under God's authority. The war for the universe, however, ended long ago. Now the battle is for the possession and corruption of men's souls is on till the end. In both our victories and defeats, God continues to keep the enemy in check.

Our duty in temptation is to resist. Oscar Wilde once said, "The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. I can resist everything but temptation." "I can't help it"; "the devil made me do it"; and "there was no way I could say no" are phrases of defeat. Furthermore, they are simply not true, but as long as you believe you are at the mercy of the devil, you are. Imagine a city whose citizens were convinced that no matter what measures they took, their enemies would eventually overrun their walls. They would probably just surrender without a fight. Ability plus opportunity is responsibility. God knows your ability. God gives the opportunity by way of an escape hatch. It is therefore your responsibility to say no to temptation.

#### ✚ God Knows How to Deliver Us from Temptation

Still another promise of God is that He knows how to deliver us from temptation.

*"and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into*

*ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment"* (2 Peter 2:5-9).

In the context of 2 Peter 2, the writer speaks of Noah and Lot, who were in dire situations and endured faithfully because of the Lord's help. Daniel was delivered out of the mouth of lions. Note that deliverance is not avoidance. Sometimes we wish that God would bulldoze all the testing trees down in the forest of life, but that would not be in our best interest. God even had Paul endure *"the thorn in His flesh"* because it was better for Paul to endure the trial than to be completely delivered from it (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

## God The Spirit Helps

If God the Son and God the Father aid us when we are tempted why should it be difficult to accept the Biblical fact that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and just as active as the other members of the Godhead. The Spirit will not keep us from being tempted. He does reassure us by putting His validating seal on our relationship to God (Eph. 4:30; 1:13,14). To walk by the Spirit requires bearing the fruit of the Spirit. As we walk we will produce fruit which will help us combat temptation (Gal. 5:22-23). Thus the opposite, works of the flesh will not be a part of our lives (Gal. 5:19-21). The body must be dedicated to God (1 Cor. 6:19). If our bodies are used in such a way we will not use them as instruments of sin. We are commanded to be *"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Eph. 5:18). The tense of the verb indicates a continuing action. It is not a matter of having been filled once and never needing further filling. It is a matter of remaining at the fountain constantly. Constantly imbibing the Word of God: the sword of the Spirit. We do not need enthusiasm in the pulpit like we need commitment in the pew. Like Christ the Holy Spirit is involved in being our Intercessor. *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Rom. 8:26).

### Questions:

1. How does the fact that Jesus was tempted just like you and me yet without sin, comfort you and aid you when you face temptation?
2. What has enabled Christ to deal compassionately with us (Heb. 5:2)?
3. List some ways in which Christ aids us in temptations?
4. What does "intercession" mean? Give examples of Jesus' intercession.
5. T F Yielding to some temptations are simply unavoidable.
6. Why did Cain fall into temptation and kill his brother? How could he have avoided sin?

7. T F The way of escape is always easy to find in every temptation.

8. Why are we able to bear up under any temptation?

9. Is Satan's power to tempt man limited? Explain.

10. How did God deliver Noah and Lot from the tempting worlds of their day?

11. How does the Holy Spirit help us in temptations?

#### Application & Discussion:

1. What are some of the "escape" hatches you can use when you face temptation?

2. Having given into a temptation in the past, have you been able to defeat the same temptation the next time you were confronted with it? How?

Homework: Sing the song *Does Jesus Care?* each day this week.

## Spoils of Battle

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While we live we will never come to the point when all temptations cease. Since we will always be tempted, why should we adopt a lifestyle of continual struggle? How can we maintain the positive attitudes toward temptations? By considering the rewards of those who are victorious over temptation. There are several rewards in battling and overcoming temptations.

They are like spoils that go to the victor of the battle. These blessings encourage us to press on through the trials of life. Mohammed inspired his soldiers to fight to the finish by his assurances that faithful servants who died on the field of battle, would be taken to a land filled with the things that gratify the lusts of the flesh. There are certain remunerations or rewards for all soldiers who honorably serve the time required by the government. For the Christian soldier the helmet of salvation will be turned in for a crown of life. They will cast off the armor and put on robes of white. They enter into the gates of that eternal city where there will be not more war.

### The Grace of God

Paul was afflicted with the thorn in the flesh. Three times he prayed that it might be removed. Christ responded that His grace was sufficient for Paul (2 Cor. 12:9,10). Grace was Paul's ample reward, though it did not remove the trial it enabled him to triumph. Grace makes up for our failures as we repent and confess them before God.

Additionally, developing dependence on Christ's strength in him was greater freedom from this trial. The awful, never-ending process of combating temptation is God's means of maturing us and conforming us to the image of Christ. To grow is to be tempted. We can't have one without the other.

The Grace of Christ is a way to knock the wind out of a puffed up ego. We are forced to recognize that we are saved by grace and not of ourselves. A Christian is what he is by grace (1 Cor. 15:10). He was saved from his sins by grace and if he is to be saved eternally it will be by grace (Ac. 15:11). Like the bumper sticker says, "Christians are not perfect just forgiven."

A fictitious story will help illustrate the point. A Christian died and went to heaven. Before he could enter the pearly gates an angel with a clip board informed him that he must have 1,000 points. The man thought to himself that this would be easy, so he began to rattle off his acts of righteousness. "Well, let's see, I obeyed the gospel at the age of 14. I was faithful in attendance all my life (except for the tour of duty in the military) and I always made it a point to have my Bible class lessons prepared. How many points so far?" The angel replied, "that's one point". The man started to feel sick and began once more, "Ah, I, ah, taught the Bible class for the teenagers and a couple of times for the adults, I was a deacon for seven years, I was faithful to my wife of 45 years and ah, how many points would that make?" "One more point", replied the angel. The sweat was pouring, knees were knocking and his face was burning. "Well, you know how hard I worked at bringing my mother and father and sister to the Lord, the couple that lived next door, and a co-worker. I prayed often. Studied and meditated daily on the Word. Is that enough?" "No," said the angel, "it only totals up to three whole points." Now sunk to his knees the man cried, "I don't know how I could possibly get the other 997 points accept by the Grace of God." The angel answered, "That is the other 997 points!".

### Greater Resistance to Future Temptations

It is like the old saying, "What does not kill you, makes you stronger." This saying is so true when it comes to enduring trials and battling temptations. James wrote, *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man*

*also will fade away in his pursuits" (1:2-11).*

When faced with trials the Christian is to rejoice. Joy and trials seems to be opposites, but this paradox is found many times in the Bible (1 Pet. 1:6,7). When the apostles left the Sanhedrin, having been beaten, they went the brethren rejoicing (Ac. 4:41). Paul wrote, "Let us glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3). The apostles rejoiced at being imprisoned (Acts 5:41). Paul and Silas having been beaten and cast into a Philippian jail were singing and praying at midnight (Acts 16:25).

Trials come in various forms. The Greek term for "various" is the word from which we get polka dot. No matter what size, what type, what time, etc. trials come saints must count it all joy.

The trial of ones faith produces patience: "*knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*" (1:3).

James goes on to show us Job as the perfect example of patience produced under trial (5:7-11). No matter what was thrown at him Job would not give up. While trials produce patience, patience triumphs over the trials. There is nothing more emphasized in the New Testament than the quality of just keeping on whether things go well with us or not. Do not pray that God give you an easy life, but by the trials He can make you a patient Christian. It is by this patience we will save our souls.

We are to be like the runner joyfully endures pain knowing that it builds endurance. As a matter of fact these tests lead to perfection and completeness. "*But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*" (Js. 1:4).

The end result of maturity is that the saint is found "lacking nothing." However, he may lack the wisdom he needs to face temptation. One might think James would refer the needy Christian to a study of God's Word to have wisdom. Yet, he tells them to pray. The reason for prayer for wisdom is that God is a great Giver. The manner of his giving is two fold: 1) God is impartial in His giving of wisdom ("who gives to all liberally") and 2) God gives wisdom "without reproach."

Prayer requests must be asked "*in faith with no doubting.*" Satan tried to put doubt in the mind of Christ. He caused Eve to doubt God's goodness. He attempts to create doubt in us. Tempting us to doubt the Person, power, providence, presence, promises, percepts of God. Is God really there? To doubt the reliability of God's Word, the Bible. To doubt others (1 Cor. 13:5,7). Even to have doubt in ourselves and our salvation. When doubts arise as they will in all those subject to temptation, we must pray. Christ prayed in the Garden when He was faced with the uncertainty of facing the cross (Mk. 9:24; Lk. 17:5). We must replace doubt with faith (Heb. 11:6). Those who doubt when they pray are not heard for three reasons: 1) they are unstable as "a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind," 2) they are "double-minded" and 3) completely "unstable."

One of the reasons men may doubt the power of prayer for wisdom and needed heavenly helps is the riches reliance on the security and power he had in money. The poor "lowly brother" will not glory in his money, but when he is exalted by the Lord. The rich man will glory once he has suffered the humiliation of the failure of his riches. The pursuit of riches instead of prayer for wisdom will result in them passing away like a flower loses its glory in the heat of the sun. Money is not powerful enough to resolve the issues related to temptation.

## A Crown of Life

James gives a beatitude of reward for those who endure temptation. They will receive a crown of life 12 "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*" (1:12). When the Christian has fought the good fight of faith and it comes time for him to lay his armor down, he will be clothed in robes of white and exchange his helmet of salvation for a crown of life (2 Tim. 4:7,8). Thus, we need to be careful lest we lose our crown (Rev. 3:1). As kings, conquerors, and contestants in the ancient games had to be careful, so must we. When kings were defeated in battle, they lost their crown to the victor, who exchanged his helmet of war for the crown of rulership. For the Christian to lose the war against temptation is to forfeit his claim to the crown of eternal life. James tells us that when the process of temptation comes to fruition, it brings forth death (Js. 1:13-15). He also wrote that if we overcome we will receive a crown of life (Js. 1:12).

## Deliverance from Our Enemy

Years ago when a city state was faced with the threat of superior forces of another city, they were about to give up hope. One man came forth with a plan. It seems the horses for their enemy were trained to dance and prance when a certain marching tune was played. Thus, they assembled a band to play the tune while the rest of their men prepared an ambush. The enemy was easily defeated. Those who do not give up and surrender to the forces of Satan will be delivered by the Lord.

The Psalmist wrote, "*The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him*" (Ps. 34:7,8).

## Exaltation

A Christian boy away at college was confronted with temptation. He continued to push away from it. Some of his fellow students pressed him to yield. One of them in exasperation said, "come on and do it! Who will know the difference?" He answered: "I will know, God will know, my Christian friends will know, and when Christ comes everyone will know. Sorry, fellows, but you'll have to count me out." To yield is not to be exalted by God (Job 10:14; Gen. 39:9).

Eventually all our bad choices will be exposed to bring shame upon us, our families, our friends, the church and our God. When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, who would have known if he were to just give in. But, this righteous young man resisted temptation by saying, "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Gen. 39:9). God later exalted Joseph to a position second only to Pharaoh himself.

Victory is too sweet and defeat is too vicious for the Christian soldier facing temptation. May these rewards prompt us to overcome.

### Questions:

1. Since we will face temptations all the days of our lives, why not just give up and give in to temptation?
2. How did Christ help Paul in his struggle with the thorn in his flesh?
3. How can one find joy in facing trials and temptations?
4. How do trial and temptations produce patience?
5. In what manner does God give wisdom?
6. List the three reasons why the prayers of the doubter are not heard?
7. Why is money do useless when battling temptations?
8. According to James was is the cost of defeat and what is the reward of victory in our battle with temptations?
9. How did Joseph's defeat of temptation lead to his exaltation?



Application & Discussion:

1. Give examples from the Bible where God delivered those from their enemies who put their trust in Him.
  
2. List the various ways this workbook has aided you in your struggle with temptations.

Homework: When faced with temptations this week keep your eyes on the heavenly prize.