

Morality: Choosing God
Lesson 4 – Overcoming Temptations

1. Every person is tempted to do wrong. Does the devil play a role in this? Of course, he does. The Bible calls him "*the tempter*" (**Matthew 4:3**). He is our enemy, who like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he might devour (**1 Peter 5:8**). Satan tempts all men through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (**1 John 2:16**). He is powerful, but we know that first century saints were able to overcome him: ". . . *you have overcome the wicked one*" (**1 John 2:13**).
2. The scriptures speak in regard to our attitude toward temptation. In **James 1:12-15** we're told:
 - 2.1. **12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which [the Lord] promised to them that love him.**
 - 2.1.1. The "joy" of **James 1:2** is for the opportunity to win; the "blessed" of **James 1:12** is the "joy" of one who has won. Therefore, endurance shall be rewarded; so stay with it, pay the price, finish the course and fight the battle, endure to the end! Such a one is "approved of God." The reward of steadfastness is the crown of life, the crown of righteousness
 - 2.1.1.1. **2 Tim. 4:8** - henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.
 - 2.2. **13 ¶ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man:**
 - 2.2.1. The words translated by "tempted" and "tempteth" in the context of **James 1:13** and **James 1:14** are appropriately defined as acts of enticement, allurements, or inducement to sin.
 - 2.2.2. The accusation prohibited is one which alleges that God is the source of man's temptation. The ASV with footnote would read, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God ..." The word "from" more accurately captures the Greek word's meaning and more clearly conveys the thought of excluding God from consideration as the source of temptation.
 - 2.2.3. Men should not so accuse God because God cannot be tempted by evil (literally, is incapable of being tempted) and God Himself does not tempt any man.
 - 2.2.4. Adam and Eve, the human parents of all living, stand as the first case of man's blaming God or others for his own failings. In reply to God's question about eating the forbidden fruit, Adam, blaming Eve, replied, "**the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat**" (**Gen. 3:12**). Eve, in turn, tried to

excuse or lessen her guilt, saying, "**The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat**" (**Gen. 3:13**).

2.2.5. It is popular in our day to blame others for our failings.

2.3. **14 but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.**

2.3.1. One conclusion of these two verses, simply stated, is that man is personally responsible for his own sin. The temptation of man occurs by means of an appeal to his own lust or desire.

2.3.2. "Fishing lure"

2.3.2.1. Fish safely hidden away beneath a rock, several yards away from and a few feet below the boat of the fisherman determined to have a seafood dinner. The bait, a most attractive but deadly lure, is cast a bit beyond the fish's nest.

2.3.2.2. The drawing power of the bait is proportionate to both the fish's hunger and its perception of the bait as something able to satisfy its appetite.

2.3.2.3. A smarter or less hungry fish would have rejected the bait, and so it is with the faithful child of God most of the time.

2.3.3. Some will try to blame God, Satan etc.

2.3.3.1. **Romans 14:12** – So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

2.3.4. How does sin develop?

2.3.4.1. The first stage is TEMPTATION (**14**)

2.3.4.1.1. This stage involves two things:

2.3.4.1.1.1. LUST (desires, NKJV) - a strong desire for something

2.3.4.1.1.2. ENTICEMENT - an opportunity and encouragement to satisfy the desire

2.3.4.1.1.3. Put into a mathematical formula: **Temptation = Desire + Opportunity**

2.3.4.1.1.4. E.g., a small boy is TEMPTED to steal some cookies when he WANTS them (desire) and has a good chance to get them and not be seen (opportunity)

2.3.4.1.1.5. But remember, it is NOT a sin to be TEMPTED - cf. the example of Jesus,

2.3.4.1.1.6. **Heb. 4:15** - **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**

2.4. **15 Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.**

2.4.1. **Romans 3:23** – for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God

2.4.2. **Romans 6:23** – For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2.4.3. The second stage in the development of sin is SIN ITSELF (**15**)

2.4.3.1. Temptation leads to sin only when you yield and ACT upon it

2.4.3.2. Sin therefore requires the added step of ACTION

2.4.3.3. Putting it again in mathematical terms: **Sin = Desire + Opportunity + Action**

2.4.4. The final stage is the consequence of unforgiven sin: DEATH (15)

2.4.4.1. This refers to spiritual separation from God, which is the "wages of sin" – **Rom. 6:23**

2.4.4.2. Ultimately such "death" involves eternal punishment

2.4.4.3. **Rev. 21:8** - "**But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**"

2.4.4.3.1. Putting it once more in the form of an equation:
Desire + Opportunity + Action + No Forgiveness = Punishment!

2.5. **1 Corinthians 10:13** – There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.

3. With God's help we, too, can overcome him. Just what can you and I do to overcome his temptation? Here are some "must" items:

3.1. **First, we must have a strong desire to overcome him.** In some sporting events, there can be tie scores. But with Satan, there will be no ties. We will either defeat him, or else he will defeat us. If we are going to overcome him, then we must first possess the desire to do that. Ask yourself, "*How strongly do I really desire to overcome Satan?*" The Bible says, "*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never fall*" (2 Peter 1:10). Diligence to overcome comes from desire.

3.2. **We must resist Satan.** Overcoming the devil does not happen by accident! "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7). Some Christians fail to overcome temptation because they never really try to resist the tempter. How can we resist him? "*Resist him, steadfast in the faith*" (1 Peter 5:9). What else helps in our resistance? "*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11).

3.3. **We must fill our hearts with God's word.** If our heart (mind) is filled with the word of God, then we will know what is right and wrong in the sight of God and this will help us be prepared in advance when the devil tempts us. The Psalmist wrote, "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You*" (Psalm 119:11). Christians are instructed, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*" (Colossians 3:16). If we will follow this instruction, then we will be better prepared to overcome the evil one.

3.4. **We must imitate the example of Jesus.** What did Jesus do when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness? Each time He was tempted, He said to Satan, "*It is written,*" then quoted the word of God. Like Jesus, we should

use *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17) when we do battle with the tempter.

- 3.5. **We must flee from iniquity and spiritual danger.** *“Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on”* (Proverbs 4:14,15). The New Testament says, *“Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity . . . Flee also youthful lusts”* (2 Timothy 2:19,22).
- 3.6. **When tempted, we must look for a way of escape.** *“. . . 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 Corinthians 10:13). Where is the way of escape from temptation? We must seek for it.
- 3.7. **We must watch and pray.** Jesus told His weary apostles, *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41).
4. The devil does not want any of us to go to heaven. He uses every means at his disposal to get us off course. If we are serious about overcoming him, then each of the seven things that we have noted above is essential in our fight against him.