

Overcoming Temptation: Understanding Its Deceptive Process

I. REVIEW FROM RECENT MESSAGES ON OUR WAR AGAINST LUST

- A. The Christian life is a cooperation with God's grace. ***God will not do our part*** and ***we cannot do His part***. If we do not do our part, then God withholds some of the blessing He wants to give us. ***Our part*** includes making quality decisions to deny ourselves (say no to sin), to feed our spirit on the Word, to ask for God's help through prayer with fasting, and to embrace godly activities (serving) and relationships (fellowshipping, confessing our sins), etc. ***God's part*** is to release supernatural influences on our heart (power, wisdom, desires), on our body (healing) and on our circumstances (provision, protection, direction) and relationships (favor).
- B. We are in a spiritual conflict that has two battle fronts which includes both a ***war inside*** our heart (our personal battle with sinful desires for pleasure) and a ***war outside*** our heart (seeking justice in healing the sick, revival, righteousness in government, winning the lost, etc.). While many acknowledge the war on the inside, they do not attack it with prayer.
- ¹ Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members ? (Jas. 4:1)*
- ²¹ I find then a law (principle), that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. **22 For I delight in the law (Word) of God...23 But I see another law (principle) in my members, warring against...my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members...? (Rom. 7:21-23)***
- ¹¹ I beg you as...pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... (1 Pet. 2:11)*
- C. Lust has many expressions including pride, anger, covetousness, thefts, bitterness, immorality, pornography, hatred, slander, jealousies, drunkenness, over-indulgence with entertainment or food or, legal and illegal addictions, etc. (Mk. 7:22; Gal. 5:19-20; 1 Jn. 2:16-17).
- D. Our war with lust is difficult as we discard "sinful baggage" that we may enter the narrow gate as the only way to experience God's Kingdom. Only a few persevere in their struggle against lust.
- ¹⁴ Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way...to life, and there are few who find it. (Mt. 7:14)*
- E. Denying our lustful desires is the theatre God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle, thus, a different assignment from which we offer our gift of love to God. We have been given the indescribable gift of life plus the gift of redemption. We must respond to these with love that seeks to obey Jesus regardless of its cost in denying ourselves (Mt. 16:24).
- ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me... (Jn. 14:21)*
- F. The positive side of our struggle is that saying, "no" provides an opportunity to express love to Jesus and receive His reward for making righteous decisions in the midst of temptation. This is one way that we "buy gold from Him" in this life (Rev. 3:18).

II. PRAY THAT YOU DO NOT “ENTER INTO TEMPTATION”

⁴⁰ *He (Jesus) said to them to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Lk. 22:40)*

A. To “enter temptation” speaks of something far more intense than the general temptations that we face in a sinful culture. It is a specific “storm” attacking our soul as the battle goes to a higher level when three components come together. First, our lust is aroused. Second, demonic activity is heightened. (I think of Satan’s hosts breathing evil fire on our spirit, like a dragon, causing temptation to go to the next level). Third, the circumstances are optimum for sin to occur.

B. There are opportune times when demonically energized temptations hit us suddenly like a storm.
¹³ *The devil ended every temptation...he departed from Him until an opportune time. (Lk. 4:13)*

C. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed for them to be kept from the evil one. Jesus was praying for them in their struggle in the garden of Gethsemane and then for the rest of their lives.

¹⁵ *I...pray that You...should keep them from the evil one... (Jn. 17:15)*

D. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus exhorted us to pray two things related to “entering into temptation.” First, that God would direct our steps and thus lead us away from circumstances that would bring added temptation. Second, that God would deliver us from the heightened activity of Satan’s fiery missiles. One part of our battle is related to wrong circumstances and the other part to evil supernatural forces. God will help us more in this battle as we actively ask Him to.

¹³ *Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. (Mt. 6:13)*

²³ *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD... (Ps. 37:23)*

E. Praying after we yield to sin in “the storm of temptation” expresses humility that depends on God’s forgiveness as we acknowledge our failure. Praying before we “enter the storm of temptation” expresses humility that depends on God’s strength as we acknowledge our weakness and propensity to sin. Pre-emptive prayer: our pre-temptation prayers for help are as a pre-emptive strike against Satan’s attack against us. We reduce our temptation by prayer, fasting and confession. To pray ahead of time is to “take heed” to our great need in the fierce battle within.

F. Our war on the inside has a natural and supernatural dimension. In the natural, we war by making quality decisions to deny sin and to take appropriate actions. In the spiritual, we war by actively resist the supernatural demonic influences by prayer, fasting, and declaring the Word. We must use spiritual weapons because our lusts are energized by spiritual (demonic) powers.

¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities ...against spiritual hosts (demonic armies) of wickedness...¹³ Take up the whole armor of God (spiritual weapons), that you may be able to withstand in the evil day (day of temptation)...¹⁶ you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one...¹⁸ praying always... (Eph. 6:12-18)*

⁴ *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (2 Cor. 10:4)*

- G. We must resist the supernatural dimension (fiery darts of lust) of Satan’s attack against us in our war on both the inside and outside battle fronts.

⁸ *Your adversary the devil...⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9)*

⁷ *Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas 4:7)*

- H. In the battle we feel an irrational heightened fear or oppression or anxiety. We feel a hopeless despairing sense of vanity in our life. Many seek to simply reason their way out of spiritual attacks instead of resisting demons. They simply think through why they are feeling oppressed or heavy instead of praying against the demons. It is a real battle with real demons and not just a sleepless night or difficult hour of temptation. The battle is winnable.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF TEMPTATION

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. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (Jas 1:12-15)*

- A. James spoke of receiving the “crown of life” as the reward of enduring or persevering in obedience in our war with lust. This is a crown of authority in the age-to-come that God gives to those who overcome. It is called the crown of life because we reigned in righteousness in this life (Rom. 5:17), and thus, will reign in authority in the age-to-come. Some of those who are saved are “approved” on the Last Day to rule in the age to come. God approves or declares that we were consistently faithful to respond in obedience under the pressure of temptation.

⁸ *There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and...also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:8)*

¹⁰ *When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints...¹¹ Therefore we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling...¹² that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him... (2 Thes. 1:12)*

- B. Jesus will reward those who overcome Jezebel’s lust with authority (crown) over the nations.

²⁰ *You allow...Jezebel...to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality...²³ I will kill her children with death...I will give to each one of you according to your works...²⁶ He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations...²⁷ He shall rule them with a rod... (Rev. 2:20-27)*

- C. David asked God to understand the processes that led to his stumbling in sin. James provides insight into the process of being overcome by temptation. He pointed out six deceptive stages.

¹² *Who can understand (subtle processes that lead to stumbling) his errors? Cleanse me from secret (unperceived) faults. ¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them*

***not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless...¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD...* (Ps. 19:12-14)**

D. **Stage #1:** Being drawn away by lustful desire is the early stage just before “entering temptation.” Our imagination is stirred up as we begin to casually think on the possibility of walking out lustful actions (pride, anger, covetousness, thefts, immorality, pornography, bitterness, hatred, slander, jealousies, drunkenness, over-indulgence, etc. (Mk. 7:22; Gal. 5:19-20).

E. Satan wants our fleeting thoughts of lust to become sustained thoughts (fantasy). There is a big difference between a momentary wrong thought and being captured by it. This difference has been likened to the difference between a bird flying over someone’s head and a bird building a nest on it.

F. What we say or look at are primary sources that feed lust until it captures it. David understood that a primary way in which we open the door of lust to our soul is our speech.

³ Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. (Ps. 141:3)

¹ I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth... (Ps. 39:1)

² If one does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body...⁶ The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body... (Jas 3:2, 6)

G. David understood that a second way in which we open the door of lust to our soul is our eyes.

³ I (David) will set nothing wicked before my eyes... (Ps. 101:3)

¹ I (Job) have made a covenant with my eyes; why should I look upon a woman? (Job 31:1)

¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin... (2 Pet. 2:14)

H. Solomon emphasized the place of our speech and eyes in establishing our life.

²³ Keep your heart with all diligence, out of it spring the issues of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you...²⁶ let all your ways be established. (Prov. 4:23-26)

I. **In Stage #1**, we must pray (not to enter into temptation) and declare the Word (against Satan’s flaming missiles (Eph. 6:16) and confess (to God, those we sin against and to trusted friends).

1. It is necessary to identify when we are being drawn away by lust. We cannot heal nor war against darkness (bondage, compromise, confusion) that we can’t identify (acknowledge).

³² You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (Jn. 8:32)

2. Stage one is the easiest stage to resist the power of lust. This is when lust has its least power over our hearts. It gets much more difficult and painful as the stages progress.
- J. **Stage #2:** Being enticed with lust occurs when we become set or entrenched in lustful thinking. We are captured in fantasy as we set our mind on the flesh. Our imagination and desires are being energized by demonic power. Our momentary fleeting lustful thoughts have escalated to sustained thoughts. The disciples in the garden became enticed (entrenched) in fear as they “entered into temptation.” We have further opened the door (through our speech or eyes), digressing from being drawn away by lust to be enticed or captured by it. At this point, we are in the “storm of temptation.”
- ⁵ *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh (pride, envy, covetousness, etc.), but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Rom. 8:5-6)*
- K. **Stage #3:** Lustful desire is conceived as it becomes settled in our heart when we have decided to walk out sinful actions. James uses the analogy of a baby in its mother’s womb. The decision to act out our lust is now “alive” within us. As a baby is alive in the womb at conception, yet is not seen by others, so, a newly conceived act of sin is “alive” in a person (yet unseen because it is not yet acted out). In this, the temptation process goes to the next level as we yield to its lure.
- L. **Stage #4:** Lustful desire gives birth to sin when we act out our lustful desires. At the time of birth, a baby comes forth so that its features can clearly be seen. So also, when lust gives birth to action, the specific features of our lust are now openly manifest.
- M. **Stage #5:** Sin becomes full-grown (sin grows up) in us as we become addicted to various lusts. Our lust never just stops with one act or conversation, but continues to grow up until it is full-grown. Whatever lust we walk out today, we enlarge our capacity to walk it out tomorrow in greater measures (addictions). Each area of lust (pride, covetousness, anger, etc.) has expressions of addictive thinking or behavior that will inevitably come forth over time, if we continue to walk them out. Full grown sin is less and less satisfying as it is more and more depressing. It also leaves us with worse consequences that bring shame and pain to us and those we love.
- ² *...having their own conscience seared with a hot iron... (1 Tim. 4:2)*
- ²² *Put off...the old man which grows corrupt... (Eph. 4:22)*
- N. **Stage #6:** Sin brings forth full death. The fruit of sin is always death. It progressively destroys life in our souls as it quenches and dulls our spirit. It injures our family, ministry, relationships, finances and a part of our destiny in God. We rejoice in the assurance of being forgiven, however, the years wasted in sin are truly lost and cannot be made up for.
- ²³ *For the wages of sin is death (loss)... (Rom. 6:23)*
- ²¹ *As sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness... (Rom. 5:21)*

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will...reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will ...reap life. ⁹ Let us not grow weary...in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Gal. 6:7-9)

- O. Sin always leads to death. We have two choices, either we die voluntarily to its lustful lure in righteousness or we die involuntary because we yielded to it and now reap its shame and painful consequences. To walk in liberty we must eventually go back anyway and obey God at the first stage of temptation. Why make it more difficult by allowing temptation to grow in us, only to have to go back and confront the working of death and darkness in our souls during that time?

⁶ God will render to each one according to his deeds...⁸ to those who are self-seeking and do not obey...⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil.... (Rom. 2:6-9)

- P. Sin also brings death to those we lure down the path with us. Most do not like to sin alone, but want others to sin with them, using false doctrines of grace to allure them (Jude 4; 2 Pet. 3:18).

⁴ Certain men have crept in unnoticed... who turn the grace of our God into lewdness (Jude 4)

¹ There will be false teachers...who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord...² Many will follow their destructive ways...³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words... ¹⁸ They allure through the lusts of the flesh... (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 18)

- Q. The promise that God would make a way of escape is often quoted out of its context. This promise is for believers who “take heed.” Many fall because they neglect to “take heed.”

¹² Let him who thinks he stands (against four sins of 1 Cor. 10) take heed lest he fall...¹³ God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:12-13)

³³ Take heed, watch and pray...³⁵ Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming...³⁷ What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mk. 13:33-37)

IV. BEING SAVED OR DELIVERED FROM TEMPTATION

- A. **Warning:** Do not be deceived by the subtle process of sin. Lust is deceitful in that it promises not to hurt or entrap us. Insanity is repeatedly doing the same thing, while expecting different results.

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. (Jas 1:16)

²² The old man...grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... (Eph. 4:22)

¹³ ...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb. 3:13)

- B. God's Word implanted in us, is the means He uses to save (deliver) our heart from sin. We must deny all lust, in both the early stages (filthiness) and the progressive stages of addictions (overflow of wickedness). It is far easier to deal ruthlessly with all in the early stages of sin.

²¹ *Therefore lay aside (deny ourselves) all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save (deliver, free) your souls. (Jas 1:21)*

¹ *Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (pride, etc.).... (2 Cor. 7:1)*

C. The Word is implanted in our hearts through long and loving meditation on it.

²⁰ *He who received the seed on stony places...is he who hears the Word and receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. (Mt. 13:20-21)*

D. Jesus created and now governs by speaking God's Word (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17). The Spirit hovers and waits to release power wherever the Word is spoken by those in covenant with God. Our model of warfare is seen when Jesus spoke the Word to drive Satan back (Mt. 4:3-11).

² *The earth was without form, and void...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light" ... (Gen. 1:2-4)*

E. Confession of our sins is essential for healing. We confess our sins in two different ways. First, we confess sin to those we sin against. Second, we confess our sins to a trusted friend for accountability and support. Both express humility and thus, attract the grace of God (Jas 4:6).

¹⁶ *Confess your trespasses to one another...that you may be healed. (Jas 5:16)*

⁷ *If we walk in the light (filled with the Word and confession of sins) as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus...cleanses us from all sin. (1 Jn. 1:7)*

⁶ *He gives more grace...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (Jas 4:6)*

F. All approaches to freedom from sin and addictions must include receiving God's word in meekness until it is implanted in our soul through meditation and prayer with fasting.