

The Tempter

His Tactics and How to Take
Him Out

By Troy J. Edwards

*Victorious
Word* 
Christian Fellowship

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Pastor Ted Johnson and his wonderful wife Martha. You taught me much when I was at Temple of Compassion (Now Compassion Christian Center). Jesus built a strong foundation in my wife and me through your ministry.

Introduction

“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” (Luke 8:13)

The word “temptation” (Greek is *peirasmo*) in Luke 8:13 refers to adversity, affliction, and trouble. It also means “an enticement to sin.” It is the same word that is used concerning Satan’s attacks against our Lord Jesus: “*And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.*” (Luke 4:13)

Satan is the source of our temptations, regardless of what they are. Whether it is for trouble, adversity and affliction, or meant to entice one into sin, temptation is not designed to help us in any way. It is designed by the enemy to *destroy us*. Satan does not have our best interests at heart.

The phrase “fall away” in Luke 8:13 means, among many things, “to give up” or to “lose faith.” Contrary to popular teaching, a temptation is not by any means designed to be a *hidden blessing*. Its intent is to *destroy*.

The beginning of defeat for every Christian and the beginning of victory for Satan in the body of Christ is when Christians give up and lose faith because they are offended. This often happens when a person is faced with a trial or decides to live in outright sin and rebellion. This is not God’s desire for His children. God wants His people to be victorious over sin and Satan. He has given

us sufficient information and provided powerful divine resources to ensure that we win each and every time. If we fail, the fault lies with us and not Him.

This book is meant to provide the reader with a sufficient knowledge of our enemy in regard to his enticements to sin. It also teaches Biblical strategies for overcoming the temptations we face. Due to an abundance of error that has come under the guise of “orthodoxy,” chapters two through four are dedicated to vindicating God. This is because He is often blamed directly or indirectly for our temptations and sins. The Tempter uses our ignorance of God’s true character in his covert operations (Gen. 3:1-7).

Once we have established the goodness of our God, who loves us and longs for our success and the utter evil of the Tempter, who hates us and longs for our destruction, we are better equipped to understand his tactics. We can then learn strategies for defeating him in this area. Let us go through the Word of God together and learn how to issue a crushing defeat to this already defeated enemy.

People are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). The enemy’s purpose is to destroy us (John 10:10). If he can keep us ignorant of his devices, then he can succeed. If he can get us to focus on the temptation itself and ignore the source of temptation, he will continue to maintain victory over his captives.

This book assumes that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We will study what it reveals concerning the Tempter and his tactics. We will learn God’s victory plan for overcoming temptation and living in complete victory over sin. When we gain the necessary knowledge of this enemy and his ways, we will be able to pray in confidence for protection from the tempter and his arrows of temptation.

Chapter One

The Tempter

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. (1 Thess. 3:4, 5)

Everyone born into this world encounters temptation in life. The Bible tells us that temptation is common to man (1 Cor. 10:13). However, the born again Christian has an advantage that the non-Christian lacks. The born again Christian has inside information concerning the primary source of temptation. Most temptation that comes our way has a personality behind it. The Bible calls this person the *tempter*.

In the wilderness, Jesus faced some of the most severe temptation known to man. It is here that the Bible reveals exactly who the “tempter” is:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. (Matt. 4:1-3)

Jesus engaged in warfare with the tempter, who is revealed as the devil himself. The Bible gives several titles to the devil such as Accuser, Destroyer, Adversary,

Murderer, Deceiver, Fowler, and Liar. To know victory over the enemy is to understand him in these different roles. Therefore, if one is to have complete victory over temptation and sin, one must know their enemy in his role as Tempter.

The Devil is *The* Tempter

Satan is not called *a* tempter, but is called *the* Tempter. Demons and humans might play a role as tempters. Satan, unlike God, is not omniscient nor is he omnipresent. Basically, Satan is not all knowing as God is and neither can he be in more than one place as God can be. Unlike God, Satan is limited in knowledge and location. Therefore, Satan finds it necessary to work through *agents*. These agents are the multitude of fallen angels and demons that followed him in his rebellion against God. His agents also include men and women who are yielded to him.

In spite of the fact that others can play the role of a tempter, the Bible makes it clear that Satan is *the* Tempter. He is the very source of temptation. It was invented by him. He is the father of it. He has mastered this art and has taught it to others. Satan began his business of temptation by first tempting other angels to rebel with him against God (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-18; Matt. 25:41). He continued his career by tempting the first woman in the garden:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,

God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.... (Gen. 3:1-7a)

Here was Satan's latest attempt to attack God after the failure of his first rebellion. God created men in his image who would rule over all of His creation. No doubt that God intended that man would rule even over the principalities and powers of the air, which included Satan.

Satan felt that he must act quickly in order to counter God's plan for man. He failed the last time he attempted a direct assault against God and decided to direct his attack against the creatures that God had delegated His dominion and authority to (see Gen 1:26-28 and Psalm 8). Because the man was in possession of God's own authority, Satan knew that a power play against him would end in the same failure he experienced before God Himself.¹

Furthermore, an attack based on force and power would end in his own demise. Therefore, Satan employed a strategy that had worked with the angels that fell with him. He used *temptation*. Satan knew that if he could get this couple to disobey God then he would be able to usurp the authority that they possessed (Luke 4:5-8).²

Sadly the woman yielded to the temptation. She also drew her husband in as a partner to her sin. Sin and death were brought into this world as a result (Rom. 5:12). Satan did not conquer the man and woman by *force*, but by *temptation*. This has been his most effective weapon from the beginning. He is a *Tempter*.

The Tempter's Attacks on Marriage

The temptation in the Garden reveals to us that one of the Tempter's favorite targets is in the area of marriage and families. It is his intent to destroy marriages. One of the ways he does this is through natural God-given sexual urges. The Apostle Paul wisely advised married couples to not deprive one another:

Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Cor. 7:5; NKJV)

The Tempter will destroy a marriage by tempting a husband or wife to be unfaithful to his or her spouse. Committing adultery is a violation of the Word of God (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 5:18; Gal. 5:19). Adultery is the breaking of the marriage covenant and very often ends in divorce (Mal. 2:14-15; Matt. 19:9). The breaking of a covenant is a serious thing to God and Satan knows that. Divorce causes the breakup of the whole family. Therefore, one of his tactics is to cause one spouse to deprive the other and thereby bring in the temptation to find fulfillment by some other means.

Marriage is being attacked in our day as it has never been before. Satan has persuaded society in general to reject the Biblical concept of marriage. People are

attempting to meet their sexual desires in ways that go against God's prescribed way. God's way for sexual fulfillment is through the legal marriage union of a MAN and a WOMAN.

There is no mistaking the personality behind temptation and the need to understand and obey the Word of God in order to stand victorious over it. It is God's will for us to have a happy, successful, and prosperous marriage and family life. The Tempter's will is always opposed to God's desires. Many mistakenly think that God wants less than happy marriages and even receives the blame in some religious circles for divorce. Yet, we see clearly from Paul's admonition to married couples that it is Satan, the Tempter, who is targeting marriages for destruction.

Satan's strategy is to use the individual's lack of *self control* (James 1:13-14). Although the Tempter brings the temptation, we remain without excuse if we yield to it. God expects us to exercise self control (Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:5-8). The Tempter can *entice*, but he cannot *force*. We cannot blame our lack of self control on the tempter as Eve did when God confronted her with her sin (Gen. 3:13). There is no "The devil made me do it" clause in the laws of God's kingdom. Nevertheless, we must be aware of the Tempter if we expect to overcome the temptation itself and stand victorious.

Why Does The Tempter Tempt?

What is the primary purpose of Satan's temptations? In 1 Thess. 3:4, 5, we read, "*I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.*" Satan is opposed to anything God wants to do among people. Therefore, Satan works to ensure that any work for God is fruitless, empty, wasted, comes to nothing and becomes purposeless. Had the Thessalonians submitted to the goal of the Tempter,

this would have frustrated the work of God that was done through the Apostle Paul.

Some who hold a view of God's sovereignty that requires God to be in control of every facet of every event that occurs have difficulty understanding that the devil could actually frustrate any of God's plans or goals. I do not find such a concept of God's sovereignty to be Biblical or practical.

The warfare between God and Satan is REAL. There is no play acting in this war. God has not written some computer game in which Satan's actions are programmed by God Himself. Satan, angels, demons and humans are truly free moral agents who were created by God with free moral agency and can make choices that please and displease their creator (Isa. 66:3-4). By this God receives genuine love and genuine hatred.

Although Jesus has dealt Satan an utter defeat through His death, burial, and resurrection (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Col. 2:15), Satan has deceived himself into believing that he still has a chance to win this war.

Satan knows that he could not win a personal confrontation with an Almighty, all powerful Creator. He discovered this during his first attempt (see again Isa. 14:12-15. Furthermore, see Rev. 12:7-12 where he will attempt to try this again). Seeing that he cannot win a personal confrontation with God Himself, he must resort to the next best thing which is to destroy God's plan and purposes for the very creatures that God loves dearly. God loves us so dearly that He was willing to die for us. Satan knows how vast this love is that God has for us, and he views this as one of the best ways to hurt God.

Every true parent can understand this. You love your children. You would rather suffer the most terrible misery and pain than to allow your children to suffer it. To see your child suffering is far worse than for you to

suffer it yourself. If you really want to destroy someone, do harm to their children.

This is why Satan sets out to launch his attacks against the people of God. Satan knows that he cannot simply march into the earth and kill at will. He has limitations. He possesses no more authority than what we give him. How do we give him that authority? Through sin: “*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil*” (Eph. 4:26, 27). Notice that we are to anger and sin NOT. When we sin, we give place to the devil, or open the door of opportunity for him as seen in verse 27. Other versions bring even greater clarity to verse 27. *Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]*. (Amplified Bible); *Don’t give the devil a way to defeat you* (Easy To Read Version). The one who practices and continues in sin *belongs* to the devil (1 John 3:8; Eph. 2:1-5; Rom. 6:16).

God’s Provision for Victory over the Tempter

God has assured us the victory over our enemy through the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, this victory, though *available* to the believer, is not *automatic*. The victory over temptation must be appropriated through God’s Word and prayer.

Soon after our Lord defeated Satan in the wilderness He gave His “Sermon on the Mount” in which He taught us a pattern for prayer. In this prayer, we are instructed to ask for protection against the devil primarily in the area of temptation:

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. (Matt. 6:13; NKJV)

We cannot expect to overcome temptation in our own power because there is a supernatural personality behind it. We need to invoke divine power in order to deal with the temptations that assault us. The Lord, having faced severe temptations during His time on earth, knew the need for praying and relying upon God's ability in experiencing complete victory over it. A person without a daily prayer life is a person who is vulnerable to the attacks of the adversary. He or she is subject to experiencing defeat.

The Lord would not command us to pray a prayer that God had no intention of answering. If God commanded us to pray a certain way then it is because He intends to do the very thing we are commanded to pray about.³ The Lord has made all of His resources available to us so that we may live in complete victory over the assaults of the tempter. We do not need to experience defeat. We can live a life of constant victory over sin just as our Lord did (Heb. 4:15), but God expects us to approach Him in prayer in order to appropriate it.

There are some things that God will NOT do without our prayer and cooperation. God is the Almighty sovereign Lord of the universe. However, He does not force His will upon anyone. For example, it is God's desire that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), yet hell is filled with those who reject the only means of salvation - that is Jesus the Christ (John 3:16-18).

The same is true concerning the life of victory over sin. God's desire is that all of His children experience victory over the Tempter. God has instructed us to pray because victory over temptation is dependent upon our asking for it. For prayer to be effective, we must remember that God is on our side and wants us to be victorious. Too many blame Him for their failure in this area. In the next chapter we will learn how Scripture vindicates Him from such false charges.

Chapter Two

God Is Not the Source of Temptation

*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, **neither tempteth he any man**: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:13-15)*

One reason why the Tempter has been successful in his campaign against God and men is due to his ability to cloak himself and his tactics. He has been able to do this is by persuading men that God is the One responsible for their temptations and sins. Many theologians and well known Bible teachers have been unwitting advocates of this satanic false doctrine.¹

If God, in His sovereignty, ordained or decreed sin then He is ultimately the blame for temptation itself because the process stated by James in the passage above tells us that sin is the result of temptation, or being enticed by lust. However, James tells us that “*God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*” Therefore, if God is not responsible for the temptation of men then neither is He in any way culpable for the sin that comes as the result of having yielded to temptation.

To say that God in any way decreed that sin should come into this world is nothing short of blasphemy and making the Word of God a lie. The only one who would benefit from mischaracterizing God in this manner is the Tempter himself. If he can blame God, he can keep himself cloaked. If he can keep himself cloaked then men are less likely to resist him and his enticements.

We must understand that God is not the author of sin nor is sin's entrance into this world the result of some "secret decree." If we believe that God, in any way whatsoever, has anything to do with our sinning, we will be less likely to resist temptation. We will not ask God for His help and empowerment to resist sin. On the contrary, we will blame *Him* for our transgressions.

God Warned Man Not to Sin

In spite of the teaching of many theologians, God is *not* responsible for the sin that entered into the world. God did not create man with a deliberate plan that he would fall into sin. On the contrary, Solomon wrote, "*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*" (Eccl. 7:29). Here is a contrast between what God did and what man became. God made man upright but man himself sought out many ways to sin. God did one thing but man did something in contrast to what he was created to be.

Rather than God taking the blame for man's sinfulness, we should remember that He did all that was possible to keep men upright. From the very beginning God has forewarned men about the consequences of sin:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen. 2:16-17)

If God wanted man to sin then He would *not* have told him how to avoid it nor would He have warned him about the consequences of doing so.² If God wanted man to sin then why inform him about the deadly results of it?

It seems obvious that God had a plan for man that did *not* include sin.

However, someone might ask, “Then why did God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden in the first place?” It’s a legitimate question. During the first year of Christian walk, I found a book by Pastor Happy Caldwell, senior pastor of Agape Church, which was very helpful:

Man was made in the image of God. He was placed in dominion over the earth and was given the ability to choose right and wrong. The law of choice was instituted. In Genesis 2:15-17, we can see the choice God gave to Adam... Notice, the tree was not “of good and evil,” nor were there two trees - one good and one evil. It was “the tree of the *knowledge* of good and evil.” Both good and evil existed; but Adam did not know evil, he knew only good. To be legal, God had to give man a choice, so Adam had a choice from the very beginning.³

Pastor Caldwell points out that the tree was placed in the garden to give Adam a choice. However, Pastor Caldwell asked himself, “But where did the *knowledge* of evil originate?”⁴ After some study, Pastor Caldwell traced this back to the fall of Satan. Nonetheless, this perplexed him since Ezekiel 28 says that Satan was *perfect*. He later saw that Satan MADE a choice. He used his God given ability to choose against righteousness (pp. 26-28). Pastor Caldwell concludes that “If God had not given Adam the choice, as He had every other being, Satan could have demanded justice.”⁵

The tree had no intrinsic power within itself to bring death. It was the act of disobedience that caused the death of Adam and his wife. God had no intentions of creating robots no more than you or I desire to marry an android programmed to love us. Programmed love is not true love. God wanted creatures who would love Him

voluntarily. It was not too long before man's creation that the one who would later be known as "the Tempter" had rebelled against God and influenced a number of other angels to rebel with him. God needed to show the universe that He could have creatures that still had wills that were free to choose for or against Him.

Therefore, the tree was placed in the garden to put man and woman on probation. The tree was not intended as an enticement to sin. On the contrary, God made it very clear that eating from the tree would result in something horrific. Furthermore, God was very generous in giving the first couple access to numerous trees, including the Tree of Life. There was no need for man to even bother with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man had been given more than enough by a generous loving God.

Enticement to Sin Came from The Tempter

Further proof that the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil was not there to entice the first couple to sin is the fact that they were not even enticed to eat from the tree until suggestions were given by the Tempter to do so. It was after the Tempter lied about God's motives and then lied about the results of the tree is "*when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise....*" (Gen. 3:6a)

Before this we have no record that Adam or Eve had any real interest in the tree. The Bible tells us that the serpent was the responsible agent for inflaming Eve's lust: "*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*" (2 Cor. 11:3). Further, Paul makes it clear who the "serpent" was in its disguise:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

The great Presbyterian Theologian, Albert Barnes, offered this interesting insight on the above passage:

A tempter always employs cunning and art to accomplish his object. The precise mode in which Satan accomplished his object is not certainly known. Perhaps the cunning consisted in assuming an attractive form - a fascinating manner - a manner suited to charm; perhaps in the idea that the eating of the forbidden fruit had endowed a serpent with the power of reason and speech above all other animals, and that it might be expected to produce a similar transformation in Eve.⁶

How Satan could talk to Eve in the form of a serpent is not known but the Bible is clear that it was Satan who deceived Eve and led her into the sin that she and Adam committed. This was completely the doing of Satan and there is no indication whatsoever that God had any part in it.

Furthermore, it was Adam's responsibility to prevent this. God had given Adam authority over the devil and everything else on the earth (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-17; Psalm 8:4-8; Luke 10:17-20). Adam had God's Word and could have used that to resist the devil but did not do so. None of this was a set up by God. God had thoroughly equipped Adam for resisting and vanquishing the Tempter.

The most egregious thing about Adam's sin was the fact that he possessed all that was necessary to deal with the Tempter but chose to do otherwise. God cannot be blamed or held responsible no more than a commander for a soldier who has all the equipment to defeat his enemy but throws it all away and surrenders instead. Christians have been given authority over the enemy through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, yet they submit passively to his temptations and blame God for *allowing* it.

Furthermore, God could not have simply overpowered Satan on behalf of man, lest He be accused of being unfair. Satan is an accuser as well as a tempter and will accuse God of being unjust before the entire universe. God allowed Satan to exercise his freedom of choice to rebel and suffer defeat and Satan would aptly point this out to God in front of the rest of the angels. Satan would also point out the fact that God had already given man the means for resisting his temptation and had no right to overpower him when He had already commissioned man to do this task. Satan would be able to accuse man of serving God, not out of love for Him, but only because of what God can do for him, just as he did with Job (Job 1-2).⁷ Therefore, God cannot be held responsible for what a fully equipped man was not only capable of doing, but was commissioned to do.

Didn't God Know That Adam and Eve Would Fall?

An objection often raised by atheists and agnostics is the idea that God knew that Adam and Eve would fall. Determinist theologians also use this argument to refute the truth concerning free-will. Many theologians who otherwise advocate free-will also believe that God knows all of the future exhaustively. They believe that God is in what has been labeled an "eternal now" and is "outside of time" and sees all of history at the same time.

Scripture does teach that God can know all things, even future events.⁸ Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that He consistently exercises this attribute. Just as God is all powerful and can do all things, but allows His moral character to govern the use of His omnipotence, the same is true concerning His omniscience and foreknowledge. God (contrary to some theological perspectives) does not exercise His great power in a way that makes Him a “cosmic bully” or divine manipulator. Neither does He use His ability to know all things in a way that will violate the free choices of His creatures.

Just as an omnipotent deity can be ‘limited’ by finite creatures in fulfilling His will, this omniscient deity can be surprised, hurt and grieved. We find this to be the case concerning the fall of man:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Gen. 6:5-7)

Another translation reads, “*And LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart*” (A Conservative Version). This understanding does not mean that God made a mistake as some imply, but simply that He had not created man with the plan or idea in mind that he would become so wicked. The Bible

has many examples of God experiencing shock and emotional pain over the wickedness of His people:

*And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, **neither came it into my heart.*** (Jer. 7:31)

*They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, **neither came it into my mind*** (Jer. 19:5)

*And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, **neither came it into my mind**, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.* (Jer. 32:35)⁹

The Bible accurately depicts God as grieving over the sins of His people and states that these sins never even entered into His mind. How could God have foreknown or foreordained their sins if they never entered into His mind? Some may attempt to force these passages into a particular theological paradigm. Nevertheless, if Bible language does not mean what it plainly says and must be re-interpreted then it becomes difficult to trust any part of the Bible.

Since we believe that God means exactly what He says then we need not believe that God cannot be

shocked, hurt or disappointed by our sin. He is not without passion. On the positive side, he is delighted by our praise, our devotion to Him and our efforts to resist sin.

If we understand this then we can sympathize with God's desire to create and have a family. It is not that much different than our own desire to marry and have children. We take a risk when we have children because we do not know whether they will make a difference in society or become a menace to society. This also answers the false accusation of Satan that God is responsible for sin, since He created knowing full well that we would fall. Scripture refutes this idea.

Sin Is Disobedience

Furthermore, the apostle John makes it absolutely plain that the Father is not the source of the sin and lust that is in the world:

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is **not of the Father**, but is of the world. (1 John 2:15, 16)*

The Bible tells us that Satan is the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and the god (small "g") of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). The Bible also makes it implicitly clear that Satan is the one who holds control and sway over this world (1 John 5:19). This being true then it stands to reason that God had nothing to do with the sin and lust that entered into this world. On the contrary, as we have stated, man (under Satan's influence) is fully responsible for sin entering into this world:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (Rom. 5:12-14)

Paul further says, “*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners*” (Rom. 5:19). God made it clear that sin, which is disobedience to God (1 Sam. 15:22-26; Eph. 5:1-6; Col. 3:1-12; 1 Tim. 1:8-10) would have negative results upon men.

The fact that sin is disobedience to God should be another indicator that God is not responsible for it. Why would God want men to disobey Him? Yet some claim that God ordains the disobedience of men for some mysterious glory. On the contrary, God is dishonored by our sin and disobedience, and it gives unbelievers a reason to blaspheme Him (1 Sam. 2:30; 12:13, 14; Mal. 1:6; John 8:49; Rom. 2:23, 24; 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:1-5). Therefore, it does not make logical sense and certainly is not Biblical to believe that God would ordain man to sin and disobey Him. Nevertheless, God's desire for men's obedience is not from a selfish motive. God longs for men to obey Him and nearly begs for us to do so because he knows that it is for our own good (Deut. 5:29; 30:19, 20).

Even so, some ministers paint God not only *sadistically*, but also as some sort of cosmic *masochist* who enjoys decreeing the disobedience and rebellion of people for some mysterious divine purpose. God is not, I repeat, *not* the one working sin and disobedience in

anyone. The Bible is clear as to who is “working disobedience.” In Ephesians 2:1-2 we read:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience

The word for “worketh” in this passage is the word “energeo.” This word means “to be operative” or “to put forth power.” It is the exact same word found in Philippians 2:13 concerning what God does in His own people: “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” or as the God's Word Translation renders it, “*It is God who produces in you the desires and actions that please him.*”

God's will and pleasure are completely different from Satan's. Paul told the Thessalonians, “*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication*” (1 Thess. 4:3). Satan, who is the prince of the power of the air, works and empowers sinners to be disobedient. God works in believers to sanctify them and empower them to be obedient and abstain from sinful practices. God, rather than desiring temptation and sin, wills man's obedience. Satan works and operates to ensure that men disobey God.

Jesus Died To Free Us from Sin

Finally, the most serious question one must ask in all of this is why Jesus would suffer and die to cleanse us and free us from sin's tyranny if sin came into the world by God's efficacious decree? Our freedom from sin cost the precious blood of Jesus: “*....Glory and power forever and ever belong to the one who loves us and has freed us*

from our sins by his blood” (Rev. 1:5b; God's Word Translation).

God would have to be the ultimate masochist and waster of His most precious possession (1 Pet. 1:18, 19) if He ordained that men would sin. On the contrary, God shows His frustration with sin throughout Scripture. He also demonstrates His willingness to sacrifice Himself to rid the world of it. Because Jesus Christ suffered so greatly we are exhorted to walk in the freedom that has been purchased through this sacrifice:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Rom. 6:1-7)

No one can read this, understand all that Christ did, and still believe that God would secretly will the sins of men and women. This is made clear when Paul asks, “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **God forbid.** How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” (Rom. 6:1-2) The idea that God secretly wills sin is ludicrous in light of Christ’s sacrifice and the command to walk in the liberty from sin which was purchased for us. Nevertheless, Satan has been able to promote this lie through a number of Christian scholars. However, this doctrine is opposed to all that Christ has done.

The teaching that God, in His sovereignty, willed that men sin and that He controls the evil thoughts and actions of men is nonsense in light of the Lord’s suffering and sacrifice on our behalf.

Chapter Three

The Old Testament, God, and Temptation

And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. (2 Sam. 24:1)

The Tempter has been able to use a number of Old Testament passages to promote the false doctrine that God tempts men to sin. We will examine some of these and demonstrate how these passages have been misinterpreted by those who would promote a doctrine of all-controlling sovereignty – a sovereignty that would include decreeing the sins of God’s creatures.

Misunderstandings concerning God’s character often come from our failure to correctly read the Old Testament. One of the primary rules for understanding the Old Testament is to interpret it in the light of the New Testament. For example, look at the word “moved” in the above passage. The Hebrew word is *sooth* and according to Strong’s Concordance is “by implication to seduce: - entice, move, persuade, provoke, remove, set on, stir up, take away.”¹ On the other hand, James says, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*” (James 1:13). The word *tempted* in this passage according to Strong can also mean “entice.”

The Bible is “Progressive Revelation”

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16). However, if both 2 Samuel 24:1 and James 1:13 are both inspired by God then why do we have this

seemingly blatant contradiction? One reason is due to the fact that the Bible is a *progressive revelation*. This means that God revealed things about Himself, His nature, and other things over a period of time. *All* the truth about God cannot be discovered in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, etc. There was a *progressive* unfolding of the truth about God and the true source of temptation.

Satan is given little mention in the Old Testament Scriptures. While he is not absent from them, revelation concerning him is *developed* through the centuries of Biblical writings. For example, scholars say that 2 Samuel was written somewhere between 913 B.C. and 722 B.C. Another book giving similar history, 1 Chronicles, was written several centuries later, between 450 and 425 B.C. It would seem that revelation concerning the nature of God had progressed during those centuries. In 1 Chronicles 21:1 the account in 2 Samuel 24:1 is reiterated but slightly different: “*And **the devil** stood up against Israel, and **moved David** to number Israel.*”

Why the difference? One Biblical historian offers this insight concerning the two passages:

The Jews before the Babylonish Captivity were accustomed to speak of God as the immediate author of all things good and bad; but after that, they believed that the world was governed by the intervention of angels, and especially that evil angels exerted their powers to the destruction of men. It is therefore no wonder that the author of the book of Chronicles (Ezra, as most think) should change the form of speech before used, into that which prevailed in his time, and ascribe to the instigation of the devil or of an evil genius an event so hurtful to the Israelites.²

So we see that all of the revelation concerning God and Satan progressed throughout the centuries. Does this make one book less “divine” than the other?

Concerning the historical analysis above, Richard Twopeny writes:

This hypothesis does not however at all impeach the divine authority of either book. For when the Deity has condescended to speak by the mouth of men, he has always left them to use the modes of expression current and intelligible in the age in which they lived.³

Until further light was given concerning Satan and his malignant desire to tempt men, the Hebrews spoke in an idiomatic way that, when interpreted into the Western languages, would make God appear to be the One performing these acts.⁴

“Permissive” Versus “Causative”

When we begin to see that the Bible is a progressive revelation, we will also see that passages such as 2 Samuel 24:1 should be understood in a “permissive” rather than a “causative” sense. Another commentary points this out in its comments on Samuel’s record of the incident: “Chronicles states that ‘Satan . . . provoked David.’ The older account does not enter into the distinction between what God permits and what God causes. This distinction is the result of later reflection and more subtle theology.”⁵

Bible translators such as Joseph Rotherham who is known for his Emphasized Bible translation did recognize this fact and “...he has endeavoured to avoid representing God as the author or instigator of wickedness.”⁶ In his translation of 2 Samuel 24:1 he seems to strictly follow this rule: “*And again was the anger of Yahweh kindled against Israel, - so that he **suffered** David to be moved against them, saying, Go, count Israel and Judah.*”

If we understand this principle then we will no longer see the difficulty in Old Testament passages of Scripture that appear to make God the cause of wicked acts. One scholar wrote the following:

On this subject, also, Dr. Thomas Pierce, one of the most learned theologians of a learned age, has observed, “When God is said to harden men’s hearts,—to deliver them up to a reprobate mind,—to send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, and the like;— it is infinitely far from being meant of an efficacious impulse in God Almighty.” “That all those verbs,— to harden, to blind, to deliver up, to send delusions, to deceive, and the like,—are by an ordinary Hebraism only permissive in signification, though active in sound, is placed without all controversy.”

Perhaps this form of expression may have been occasioned, in part at least, by the poverty of the Hebrew language, which contains no term that accurately expresses what is understood by simple permission: so that things which God did not choose absolutely to hinder, He is said to have done; although the very permission of them was a proof of His righteous displeasure, the parties having previously offended Him by acts of presumptuous transgression.⁷

Several pages later the author notes that “Inattention to Scripture forms of expression is one of the most fruitful sources of theological error.”⁸ If we would remember that the Bible was not originally written in English (especially KJV English) and will remember that there is always difficulty in translating words and phrases from one language to another (especially since a word could have multiple meanings) then this would help to allay some of our confusion as we come across certain Old Testament passages that appear to make God the author of all sin and misery.

Due to the failure of many to understand Biblical language in the sense of God *permitting* rather than *causing* wickedness,⁹ and to understand the Bible as a progressive revelation and thereby interpret all passages in light of the New Testament revelation, they have made God the author of temptation and sin. Satan has been able to hide behind this veil and successfully destroy men because they have no basis for resisting him. After all, if God is the source of the temptation, how could I resist Him?

A Lying Spirit Sent By God?

It is not within the scope of this book to examine every Biblical passage that makes God appear to be the author of the sin. However, as we look at a few, particularly some of the most well known ones, we can find a principle for interpreting all such passages. Among the more popular of these passages is the lying spirit that is allegedly sent by God to deceive Ahab.

And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. (1 Kings 22:20-23)

While debating this issue once on an internet forum, an advocate for the belief that God controls all the actions of men for good or evil wrote, “But God decreed for this spirit to be a lying spirit. According to you, God cannot and will not do that. You are wrong.” However, if one reads the passage carefully and without theological bias one will see that God decreed NOTHING. The evil spirit *volunteered* to do his deed and God gave him *permission* to do so and to succeed. No “divine decree” is present in this passage.

Verse 21 does NOT say that God sent for this spirit or asked for him by name. This spirit came forth and stood before the Lord. A common sense reading says that it was this spirit’s own initiative. It was neither coerced nor commanded. The spirit was the one who made the suggestion to the Lord to be the deceiver. The Lord simply permitted this – or rather, did not stop the spirit from doing what he desired to do.

The prophet gives his own commentary on the vision by saying, “*Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets....*” The word “put” has a variety of meanings in the Hebrew. Here is a list from an online lexicon:

Nathan - to give, bestow, grant, *permit*, ascribe, employ, devote, consecrate, dedicate, pay wages, sell, exchange, lend, commit, entrust, *give over*, deliver up, yield produce, occasion, produce, requite to, report, mention, utter, stretch out, extend to put, set, put on, put upon, set, appoint, assign.¹⁰

The word “nathan” is translated as “permit” (or rather “suffer”) in several other KJV passages (Ex. 12:23; Num. 21:23; Joshua 10:19; Judges 1:24; 15:1; 1 Kings 15:17; Job 9:18; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 55:22; 121:3; Eccl. 5:6). I find it interesting that the translators of the King James Version would understand that “nathan” implies

permission when any other definition would have made no sense, yet they failed to use it in this manner when other words would make it appear that God is authoring sin. Could it be that many of the translators of the KIV held to a strong deterministic theology?¹¹

Given the context, *permission* seems to be the more appropriate interpretation of 1 Kings 22:23. Rotherham's translation, which we have already noted affirms the belief that much of what is attributed to God concerning evil is *permissive*, translates *nathan* in this way: “*Now, therefore, lo! Yahweh hath suffered a spirit of falsehood to be put into the mouth of all these thy prophets. But, Yahweh himself, hath spoken concerning thee, calamity* (The Emphasized Bible). The Wesleyan commentator Adam Clarke writes the following:

The Lord hath put a lying spirit - He hath permitted or suffered a lying spirit to influence thy prophets. Is it requisite again to remind the reader that the Scriptures repeatedly represent God as doing what, in the course of his providence, he only permits or suffers to be done? Nothing can be done in heaven, in earth, or hell, but either by his immediate energy or permission. This is the reason why the Scripture speaks as above.¹²

A true interpretation helps us to see that sin is by God's *permission* and not His *causation*. In Ezekiel 13:4-9, God says that he is against the prophets who tell lies. He has NOT sent them (Jer. 29:8, 9). Therefore, 1 Kings 22 cannot be used as a proof text teaching that this is God's normal *modus operandi*. The New Testament reveals to us that Satan as the father of lies (John 8:44) and that God is a God of truth who finds it impossible to lie (Titus 1:1-2; Heb. 6:18-19). Therefore, how could He who hates a lying tongue (Prov. 6:16, 17) be a party to deception and lying?

Why Would God Even “Permit” This to Happen?

Nevertheless, some may rightfully wonder why “the all powerful God” would even *permit* these things. Remember that God, though omnipotent, has chosen to respect the free choices of His creatures. When we read the whole chapter of 1 Kings 22, we see that Ahab preferred deception over the truth. The prophets who lied to Ahab received no discipline, even when it was revealed to him that they were prophesying a lie. Nevertheless, the prophet who reveals the lie and tells the truth is thrown into prison (1 Kings 22:26, 27).

God's sovereignty consists of ruling over free-will creations. He exercises His sovereignty by rewarding good and punishing evil. The lying spirit being permitted to deceive Ahab is one of those times in which God is exercising His sovereignty in punishing evil. This is seen as we look at the New Testament:

*And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:** (2 The. 2:10, 11)*

God *sent*, or *permitted* a lying Spirit, not because He is pleased with lying and deception (since Proverbs 6:16, 17 teaches that lying is an abomination to Him and Rev. 21:8 says he places liars in the lake of fire) but when a person persists in living in deception after many admonishments given by Him, He will punish their persistent evil by giving them exactly what they want (Rom. 1:28). If a person wants to continue in their sin then He most certainly will use or permit evil men and angels to give them their desires.

Ahab was like the rebellious people mentioned in Isaiah 30:10. Ahab *preferred* deception. This is evident by his surrounding himself with none but prophets that only prophesied what he wanted to hear. When Jehoshaphat discovered this and demanded someone who TRULY heard from God (and they sent for Micaiah), then Ahab protested about this prophet speaking nothing but bad about him. After the prophet told the truth he was thrown into prison. In this instance God was exercising His sovereignty in punishing Ahab's evil by permitting him to have the deception he desired.¹³ One must be careful not to use 1 Kings 22 in a way that portrays God as dictating the actions of evil spirits, thus denying free-will.

The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart has been debated for centuries. However, we have seen from the scriptures that God does not tempt or lead anyone to sin. We have seen that some Old Testament passages that make God appear to be the author of sin can be explained differently. Pharaoh's hardening can be explained in this same light.

The Scriptures mention at least five times in which God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4: 21; 9: 12; 10: 20; 11: 10; 14: 8). The Hebrew words translated as "harden" ("hazaq", "kated" and "qashah") means to make something strong or heavy or to encourage (reinforce) someone. *Hazaq* is translated as "encourage" or "strengthen" in various parts of the Old Testament (e.g. Deut 1:38, 2 Sam 11:25, 2 Chron. 35:2, etc.).

The word "harden" conveys a mistaken idea of an irresistible force upon Pharaoh. If we interpret the words as "strengthen" or "encourage" then we no longer have a picture of irresistible reprobation, thus removing the "deterministic bias" from the text. In his word studies, Marvin Vincent writes, "No irresistible constraint

compelled Pharaoh to yield to this pressure toward evil. His power of choice was recognized, assumed, and appealed to . . .”¹⁴

This is evident in the fact that Pharaoh’s servants received the same hardening that Pharaoh did, and even joined Pharaoh in his resistance to Moses and Aaron. However, they began to realize the gravity of the situation and in spite of their own personal hardening, they had had enough and wanted Pharaoh to let the people go:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him.... And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed? (Exodus 10:1, 7)

If Pharaoh was hardened in a way that removed any ability to make independent decisions, then his servants should have acted the same way. On the contrary, they urged Pharaoh to release the Israelites. Nothing in the text assumes that God had ceased his hardening of Pharaoh’s servants. Therefore, we should not look at this hardening process as an irresistible act, but simply as an *encouragement* or a strengthening of one’s resolve, though this hardening should be understood more as God *permitting* this to happen rather than *causing* it. Rotherham believed that the language in the text expressed God’s *permission* rather than His *causation*:

And Yahweh said unto Moses, When thou goest to return to Egypt, see as touching all the wonders which I have put in thy

hand, that thou do them before Pharaoh - but, I, will let his heart wax bold, and he will not suffer the people to go. (Ex. 4:21; Rotherham)

Concerning this “hardening” Rotherham further explains that “It often takes the modifications expressed by permit”¹⁵ This should remove any idea that God caused Pharaoh to do anything that he could not resist. The fact that Pharaoh willingly hardened his own heart and the Lord permitted it (rather than caused it) is seen in the following passages:

But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (ex. 8:15)

And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go. (Ex. 8:32)

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. (Ex. 9:34)

Add to the fact that at least four other times we are told that Pharaoh’s heart “grew” or “became” hard through no direct agency of anyone (7:13, 22; 8:19; 9:7). The evidence seems to conclude that God permitted Pharaoh to harden his own heart of his own free-will. The idiomatic language of the Hebrews failed to make this distinction and most of our English translations failed to translate this properly. Even so, when we interpret “scripture with Scripture” we have a better understanding

of these Hebrew idioms. In 1 Samuel 6:5-6, the Israelites warned the Philistines not to repeat Pharaoh's mistake:

Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

If the hardening of Pharaoh and the Egyptians was an irresistible act of God, then why this admonition to the Philistines? Surely the Israelites would know if this hardening was one in which Pharaoh lost all of his ability to choose differently. However, the Israelites spoke to the Philistines as if they had a genuine choice as to whether or not they could do as Pharaoh and the Egyptians did in hardening their hearts. The Israelites knew that their own language was idiomatic in that it gave "occasion" for "cause."¹⁶

God Giving Statutes That Are Not Good

Ezekiel records God as saying, "*Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live*" (Eze. 20:25). This passage has been used by atheists to affirm their disbelief in the Scripture as God's Word. If this is understood to be the statutes, commandments, and laws recorded throughout Scripture, then this is certainly a contradiction of other inspired passages such as this one in Nehemiah:

*Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, **good statutes** and commandments (Neh. 9:13; see also Rom. 7:12, 13)*

The Psalmist wrote, “*The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart*” (Psalm 19:8). Furthermore, a number of other passages teach that keeping God’s judgments enable a person to live (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 4:1; 12:1; 30:16; Neh. 9:29; Psalm 119:175; Ezek. 18:9, 17).

Either the Bible contradicts itself, or we are reading it incorrectly. I would opt for the latter. Within the context of Ezekiel 20 we see that God gives His commandments so that people could live:

*And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, **he shall even live in them** (Ezekiel 20:11).*

*But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, **he shall even live in them**; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them (Ezekiel 20:13).*

God would not contradict Himself, especially in the same chapter. Therefore, we must find a different understanding of Ezekiel 20:25. When Ezekiel 20:25 is kept in context we see that it does not imply that the *law of God* was not good. Such an understanding would contradict other portions of Scripture, so we should not assume that this is what Ezekiel is referring to.¹⁷

Let us look at the context from a different English translation other than the KJV:

because they did not obey my laws. They scorned my instructions by violating my Sabbath days and longing for the idols of their ancestors. I gave them over to worthless customs and laws that would not lead to life. I let them pollute themselves with the very gifts I had given them, and I allowed them to give their firstborn children as offerings to their gods – so I might devastate them and show them that I alone am the LORD (Ezek. 20:24-26; Holman Christian Standard Bible).

The HCSB says, “*I let them pollute themselves with the very gifts I had given them*” once again implying permission. Reading the context and looking at the passage in the light of the New Testament (as well as a different English translation) and the known character of God should convince us to understand Ezekiel 20:25 in the *permissive* sense. Nevertheless, experts in the field of Biblical languages provide affirmation for this as well. **Adam Clarke**, who was an expert in the original Bible languages, offers this comment on the verse:

That this is the meaning of the words, requires no proof to them who are the least acquainted with the *genius* and *idioms* of the Hebrew language, in which God is a thousand times said *to do*, what in the course of his *providence* or *justice* he only *permits* to be done.¹⁹

Even the well known extreme Calvinist pastor, John Gill, confirmed this when he wrote in his commentary, “he ‘gave’, that is, he permitted them to

observe such statutes; and this sense is countenanced and confirmed by (Ezekiel 20:26).”²⁰ There is no bias scholarship when it comes to understanding Ezekiel 20:25. All evidence points towards permission rather than causation.

“Gave” or “Gave Over?”

Where the KJV says, “*I gave them also statutes that were not good,*” the HSCB says, “*I gave them over to worthless customs and laws.*” Remember that little Hebrew word “*nathan*” that we discussed above and its variety of meanings? One of its many meanings besides “permit” is “give over.” The word “gave” in the KJV comes from the Hebrew word “*nathan*.” Within the context the HCSB translated this word correctly. English translations of this kind are rare.¹⁸ E. W. Bullinger. In his book, “*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible,*” says this about verbs such as the verb “gave” in the KJV:

Where the action is put for the declaration concerning it: or where what is said *to be done* is put for what is declared, or permitted, or foretold as *to be done*: or where an action, said *to be done*, is put *for the giving occasion* for such action.²¹

Bullinger lists a number of Scriptures in this category including Ezekiel 20:25:

Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live (*i.e.*, I permitted them to receive such statutes from the heathen); And I polluted them in their own gifts,; etc.: *i.e.*, I suffered them to pollute themselves in those gifts which, by the Law, they ought to have dedicated to Me.²²

The KJV translated this idea better in the New Testament. In Romans 1:28 we read, “*And even as they*

did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” After God has given His people good statutes and commandments to live by, and they continue to rebel then He is left with no other choice but to “give them over” to statutes and laws that were not good for them. God would not intentionally cause people to walk in statutes that were not good for them. When the people refused to obey God’s good laws, and they offered their children as sacrifices to false gods to be burned. In verse 21 God further explains:

Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. (v. 21; KJV)

The understanding is clear: because the Israelites refused to walk in the laws that God gave that were good and led to life, He allowed them to continue in the statutes of the heathen whose practices they adopted and in heathen judgments that would not allow them to live. God’s Word brings life. Walking in sin places one under the destructive death wielding power of the Tempter. The blame should not be placed on God.

Chapter Four

God Tests – The Devil Tempts

*And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt Abraham**, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of (Gen. 22:1, 2).*

Before going further in dealing with the Tempter and his tactics, let us study one more problem area found in Scripture, which is God's testing of His people. Some critics of the Bible take the above passage, compare it to James 1:13 and then claim that the Bible cannot be the Word of God because there are too many contradictions. The word "tempt" in Genesis 22:1 comes from the Hebrew word *nacah* which means "to test, try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof or test."

Nonetheless, the Greek word used in James 1:13 can mean the exact same thing. Context makes the difference. The context of James tells us that God does not tempt a person to sin:

*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: **But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed**. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is*

finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:13-15).

James tells us that the evil type of testing or tempting that Satan does is an *enticement towards sin*. As we read the context we see that no one can blame God for their temptation to *sin* because that is not God's doing. He does not set someone up for a fall. On the other hand, Satan tempts in a way to entice an individual to sin.

But How Could God Ask Such A Horrible Thing?

In spite of what James says, it does appear to us that God is asking Abraham to imitate a pagan ritual by sacrificing his son. It was a ritual that God expresses hatred towards in other parts of scripture (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-4; Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 21:6; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Eze. 20:31). Can we justify this seeming contradiction?

If we read the narrative very carefully we will find that God never told Abraham to *slay* his son nor did He tell him to burn him as a sacrifice. Old Testament scholars Keil & Delitzsch say that God, “demanded the sacrifice of the only, beloved son, as a proof and attestation of his faith. The issue shows, that God did not desire the sacrifice of Isaac by slaying and burning him upon the altar, but his complete surrender, and a *willingness* to offer him up to God even by death.”¹ (Italics are mine.)

The Good News Bible renders the passage this way, “*Take your son, God said, your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and go to the land of Moriah. There on a mountain that I will show you, offer him as a sacrifice to me.*” Notice that this translation leaves out the word “burnt.” There is justification for this.

According to the Hebrew dictionary, the word burnt-offering in the Hebrew (*olah*) can mean “whole burnt offering” or it can mean “ascent, stairway, steps.”² The Strong's Concordance says, “A primitive root; to

ascend, intransitively (be high) or active (mount); used in a great variety of senses”³ Strong says that the word used for “burnt-offering” can be used in a variety of senses. This means that adding the word “burnt” is not necessary in all cases and proves that God was not asking Abraham to perform a ritual that He despises. Knowing this, Rotherham translates the literal meaning of the word:

*And he said - Take, I pray thee, thy son, thine only one, whom thou lovest, even, Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah and cause him to ascend there as an **ascending-sacrifice**, on one of the mountains which I shall name unto thee.*
(Gen. 22:2; The Emphasized Bible)

Should Rotherham have taken liberty where the majority of translations were not so daring? Allow me to quote, at length, an exposition from an old Christian periodical:

The point to be decided is simply the accuracy of the word *burnt-offering*, as expressing the sense of the original; and this turns to a great extent upon the propriety of taking what was no doubt a technical term under the Mosaic economy, and determining the meaning of the passage under consideration by the technical sense which it acquired after the lapse of four or five hundred years. This is only the second time that the words translated “offer him up for a burnt-offering” occur; and we do not meet with them again till the giving of the law, five centuries afterwards, after which time this is the standing phrase used to denote the particular kind of sacrifice called a *burnt-offering*. But in the words themselves there is not the slightest allusion to burning. And burning is not confined to this particular sacrifice. Every sacrifice was burned, either in whole or in part; and the only

difference was that this was given up entirely to God, as too holy to be applied to any common use, or even to be eaten by the priests. The plain and literal meaning is “make it (him) ascend for an ascending,” and since it was through the fire that a sacrifice was made to ascend to God, the Septuagint translators introduced the notion of burning into their rendering of the word,* and called the “ascending-offering” a “burnt-offering.” But notwithstanding their translation, it is a doubtful and disputed question, whether the “ascending” had reference to the placing of the victim upon the altar to be consumed, or to its ascending from the altar in smoke and flame. The verb translated “offer up” does not help us to any conclusion. It is simply the causative conjugation (*hiphil*) of the verb to ascend : and signifies either take him up, bring him up, or send him up. The very same word is used in Gen. xxxvii. 28, where they “lifted up” Joseph out of the pit; in Num. xx. 25, where Moses is commanded to “bring up” Aaron and his son to Mount Hor; and in 2 Kings ii. 1, where the Lord is about to “take up” Elijah to heaven. Consequently, so far as the verb is concerned, it is left quite indefinite what was to be done with Isaac when the mountain was reached. And in strict literality the words mean nothing more than “take him up, bring him up, or make him ascend for an *olah* (an ascending, a going up, 8c. to God) upon one of the mountains.”⁴

The author concludes that Abraham’s,

...interpretation of the command was not the right one; that he received, and was intended to receive, when the mountain had been climbed. God honoured the faith which obeyed so promptly, even though a premature and mistaken interpretation led him to do more than was commanded. The error was speedily corrected; whilst the very excess of zeal only showed how heartily and trustfully the command was obeyed.⁵

God's Tests Are Not Sinful Enticements

As we interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, we see that it is possible to ask for a human sacrifice without any slaughter or bloodshed. Paul wrote, "...that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1.) It is against God's nature to test anyone in a way that is not "holy." Offering Isaac to God in a pagan ritual would have been unholy. As we read further in the narrative, we see that God did not intend to have Isaac slain and burned:

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me (v.12).

God stopped Abraham before he killed Isaac. God is testing Abraham, but not in the sense of enticing him to sin. On the contrary, God often tests people to keep them from sinning: "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, **that ye sin not**" (Ex. 20:20).

Rather than testing us to bring us into sin, God tests people in order to put His fear in our hearts and to keep us from sin. Satan's goal is to tempt us to sin. One lesson Abraham learned was that God does not want human sacrifices through bloodshed and burning. Such sacrifices are satanic in nature (Psalm 106:34-38).

Testing Is Meant to Build Faith

God's testing of Abraham demonstrates that He tests us for His sake and ours in order to strengthen our faith. Faith cannot be true faith apart from tests:

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Heb. 11:17-19).

Many of God's people do not appropriate God's promises because they often fail His tests. If we want promotions, then we must pass the tests. God needs to be sure that we will be able to fulfill the service that we are called to. Abraham was called to be the father of many nations. His progeny would be responsible for the Messiah coming into the world. This is a high calling, one in which one should be suitable for, and it required a test.

Thankfully, Abraham passed the test and God's confidence in him was vindicated. God could see Abraham's faith and obedience through his actions. Like so many Christians today who receive blessings from God, Abraham could have *coveted* the blessing (Isaac) so much that He would have been unwilling to give back to God what was given to him. Abraham also knew the promises of God and knew that if he actually slaughtered the boy, God would have raised him up again.

Israel: An Example of How Not to Take God's Tests

Christians need to learn that if God is asking us to give something to Him it is because He is testing our faith so that He can bless us with more than He has previously, both spiritually as well as physically. Too many Christians are stingy with their last dollar when God is asking for it primarily because He wants to increase their wealth. Many Christians fail the tests of God.

Israel is an example of how many of God's people so often fail His tests, which are meant for promotion and blessing, unlike Satan's temptations, which are meant for sin, failure, and destruction. Therefore, God not only tested Abraham, but his descendants as well:

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no (Exod. 16:4)

The Israelites murmured and complained quite often about food. Their acts from the time they had left Egypt up to this point demonstrated how difficult it would be for God to trust this nation with some of the responsibilities that it was destined for. Therefore, God tested the Israelites, not to entice them to sin, but to find out if they will actually walk in the light of His law.

The fact that God's testing of the Israelites was a preparation for service rather than an enticement to sin is seen in God's heartfelt statement to Moses: "*O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*" (Deut. 5:29). If God tested His people in order to push them towards sin then He would have no occasion to express such a desire. It is God's desire that people would walk in His law and commands because He wants things to go well for them. God wants to bless His people, but He cannot do it if they will use the blessings irresponsibly. Therefore, He has to *test* before He can *bless*:

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that

ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live (Deut. 8:1-2)

Why did God test these Israelites? He needed to know what was in their hearts. He had a mission and a destiny for them. They were to go into the land of Canaan and conquer it. He needed to be sure that when they reached their destiny that they would continue to obey Him.

Furthermore, it was for their benefit. God's desire was that they walk in the light of His Word so that they may live. Satan desires our failure and therefore, brings temptation intended to bring our fall. God brings tests so that we and He can rid ourselves of sin.

The False Prophet Test

God's testing of individuals for life and success in service is quite different than Satan's temptation for failure and destruction. However, we now come to a passage that appears to be more difficult to understand as it relates to God. This is concerning God testing His people through false prophets:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut. 13:1-3).

If this passage is read carelessly (as many theologians have done with passages of this nature) then we would believe that God Himself sent the false prophet to test His people. As always, we should allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. God told Jeremiah that He did not send the prophets who prophesy falsely in His Name:

*Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; **yet I sent them not, nor commanded them:** therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD (Jer. 23:32; see also 14:15).*

Furthermore, as we continue to read the rest of Deuteronomy 13, we see that God expected the people to put false prophets to death by stoning (Deut. 13:9, 10), further validating God's hatred of false prophesy. Therefore, He will not send what he condemns. The test that God will conduct is similar to that of Adam's. God has already given His people His Word. When the false prophet (whom Satan will more than likely send) comes

in order to move or to entice the people to deviate from God's Word, then God can see whether or not the people love Him and His Word enough to discern the lie or whether they prefer the deception and enticement to sin.

Nations Left To Test Israel

God promised to drive out Israel's enemies from the land that they were to possess (Ex. 33:2; 34:11, 24; Deut. 11:22, 23; Josh 1:4-5; 3:10). Yet, we read something very disturbing in the book of Judges:

I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not (Judges 2:21, 22)

Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan.... And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses (Judges 3:1, 4)

Did God break His promise simply for the pleasure of testing Israel? No! The problem was not with the promise of God but with the failure of Israel to keep His conditions. Israel continued to sin against God and this caused God to have a change of mind concerning His promise (Judges 2:1-3, 19-22; 3:1-6.)

If God "changes His mind" concerning any promise of good then it is *our* fault and not *His*. He wants

to do good for us, but we are expected to obey His commandments and do those things that please Him (1 John 3:22). He cannot bless us if we persist in sin and unbelief (Isa. 59:1, 2; Jer. 5:25). If we want God's blessings then we must keep His conditions.

God is not vindictive. Due to the behavior of the Israelites, He had no choice but to use these nations to test them with the hopeful outcome that they would return to walking in His commandments. However, the fact that God delivered the Israelites time and time again in spite of their sin is a clear indicator that God is a God of great mercy, love and patience (Judges 2:13-18).

Remember that it was Israel's own sin and unbelief that kept their enemies in the land that they should have conquered. Since *they* left them there then *God* left them there and used them to test His people. God makes many promises to His people, but if we fail to claim them by faith then we are not to blame Him.

The Test of a King

In 2 Chronicles, we find that Hezekiah, a great king, had fallen into pride due to the prosperity that the Lord gave him. Some Babylonian ambassadors came to visit with Hezekiah and God left him in order to test him:

This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart (2 Chron. 32:30, 31)

Sadly, Hezekiah failed the test which hurt His descendants (2 Kings 20:12-21). God will often test us before we are placed in a position of honor and service to Him, and He will test us afterwards as well. These tests, unlike Satan's temptations, are not designed to make us fall into sin. As we have seen from Exodus 20:20, the tests are to ensure that we do not fall into sin. For both God and us, this seems to be an information gathering time in which heart motives are examined and to find out if standards of eligibility for service are met.

Therefore, we can expect tests from God. However, He has provided His Word, and if we study for His tests like we would any good schoolteacher's, we will never fail them,

Erroneous Ideas about God's Tests

We have already concluded that none of the passages above teach us that God tests His people by enticing them to sin. However, we must also point out that none of the above passages indicate that God tests His people by sending them sickness and tragedies as so many erroneously teach. Sickness and tragedy are primarily the work of the Tempter and not God (Job 1-2; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38).

Regardless of whether we are faced with a test by God or a temptation by Satan, God has fully equipped us with everything we need to pass any test and overcome any temptation. God's tests are to see if we are able to utilize the divine resources entrusted to us. God's tests are to enable us to check our progress. Satan's temptations are designed for our failure. Yet, we need not fail. We have the full armor of God that enables us to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-18). The best way to overcome a satanic temptation is to distinguish between God's tests and Satan's temptations. God's Word makes the distinction clear.

Chapter Five

Satan: The Author of Sin

*Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, **till iniquity was found in thee** (Eze. 28:14-15).*

Many modern theologians do not believe that the above passage (and another in Isaiah 14) is a reference to Satan.¹ However I believe that this is a true historical account of Satan and his fall. The passage could not be in reference to a human since God said that this was an “anointed cherub.” Scripture affirms that cherubs were supernatural beings (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:19-22; Eze. 10:1-22). Scripture says that Satan is an “angel” though a fallen one (Job 1:6, 7; 2:1-2; Mat. 25:41; 2 Cor. 11:14).

This cherub seems to have been the one who led worship. He was perfect. God did not create him with the intent to sin nor did He predestine it. God did not place sin in him. On the contrary, sin was *found* in him. This cherub was a good and honest creature in his beginnings but later made a choice to become evil.

*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **abode not in the truth**, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for **he is a liar, and the father of it** (John 8:44).*

From this passage, we will see how Satan (and not God) is the actual author of sin. While God is the “Creator” of everything that is in existence (Col. 1:16), we must remember that He has given His creatures “creative ability” as well. Men and angels have the ability to determine or create their own futures and destinies (Psalm 81:10, 11; Isa. 48:18, 19, etc.). No one can create on God’s level, but we can make choices apart from any influence or coercion from God.

Satan’s title as “the father of lies” is a clear indicator of this creative ability. We see that Satan “abode not in the truth.” One of the definitions for “abode” is “*continue*” and another is “*stand*.” Kenneth S. Wuest, in *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*, translates the phrase as, “*and in the truth he did not maintain his standing*.” In Ezekiel’s account, Satan began as a perfect being that later chose iniquity. At one time he did stand in the truth. God is not the author of Satan’s fall because God is a God of truth (Psalm 31:5; Isa. 65:16; John 14:6, 17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 5:6) and would not lead someone away from the truth (John 16:13).

Jesus said that when Satan speaks a lie that he *speaketh of his own*. Contrary to the belief of some, God is not controlling the actions of the devil. There are things that he completely does on his own. Satan planted the seed and gave birth to the thing that we understand today as *lying*. He is the inventor and creator of lying (and murder and other subsequent sins).

Jesus taught that those who lie and murder are children of the devil. They are not God’s children. God is not the creator or father of sinful practices:

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the

works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (1 John 3:8-10).

The phrase “from the beginning” is used in John 8:44 and 1 John 3:8-10 in relating sin to Satan. This could not mean that Satan was sinning from the moment that he was created. We see in John 8:44 that Satan did not continue in the truth or *did not maintain his stand in the truth*. “From the beginning” seems to be implying Satan’s acts from the beginning of the human race:

“The phrase 'From the beginning' intimates that there has been no period of the existence of human beings in which they have not been liable to the assaults of this Tempter; that accusations against God, reasons for doubting and distrusting Him, have been offered to one man after another, to one generation after another. This is just what the Scripture affirms; just the assumption which goes through the book from Genesis to the Apocalypse.”²

Some other translations and paraphrases relate the passage to the Tempter’s ability to “father” sin. J. B. Phillip’s translation says, “*But the man whose life is habitually sinful is spiritually a son of the devil, for the devil is behind all sin, as he always has been.*” Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* paraphrase gives an even more interesting perspective: “*Those who make a practice of sin are straight from the Devil, **the pioneer in the practice of sin**. The Son of God entered the scene to abolish the Devil's ways.*”

Peterson seems to believe that “from the beginning” means that the devil was the pioneer in the practice of sin. This seems plausible since he is said to be the actual “father” of those who practice sin. His influence over much of mankind and his ability to entice them into sin has earned him the title, “the tempter.”

Satan’s Sin – An Act of His Will

Though we speak about creativity and fathering in relation to sin, we have to be careful not to think of sin as a “thing.” So many fall into error when they teach that God, by some strange logical inference, must be the creator of sin, since He created *all things* (Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11; 10:6). However, the Bible is clear as to the “all things” God created – and sin is not one of them.

Sin is not necessarily a “thing” but primarily an “idea” that usually becomes an “act.” Satan is the very first of God’s creatures that actually came up with this idea and began to act upon it. Sin is setting one’s will against God’s will. Rebellion is sin (1 Sam. 15:23). Satan is the first of God’s creatures to rebel against His will:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit (Isa. 14:12-15)

Quite often Christian theologians refer to sin and evil as a “mystery.” There may be *some* truth to this (2 Thess. 2:7-8)³, but not to the extent that it cannot be explained satisfactorily. We may not have exhaustive details concerning the *motives* behind evil, yet Scripture give us enough insight to know where it originates.

One of the reasons that so many allude to sin and evil as a *mystery* is because God is all powerful, omniscient, sovereign, good, and holy. He hates evil. To resolve what *appears* to be a paradox, they speculate that He had a divine reason for either ordaining or permitting it. This is philosophical foolishness.

Origin of Evil: Replacing God’s Will With an “I Will”

The origin of evil, while containing *some* mystery, is not as complicated as so many think. In the universe, there was one will and this will was good. It was the will of the Triune God. All creatures had freedom of will but happily aligned their will with the will of God.

Lucifer (who would later become Satan) determined “his will” and set it against the will of the Triune Godhead. When he opposed a will that is good, evil was born, and he was the father of it.

If many of our theologians would cease teaching the unscriptural and false doctrine that God has some “secret will” that is opposed to His “revealed will,” then we would not struggle as much with the so called “problem of evil.” Much of this mystery is resolved by understanding that evil came because a *creature* opposed the good will of the universe. God’s will has always been good as men normally understand the word “good” (and not a philosophical twisting of the word) and anything opposed to that will is evil. Satan birthed evil into the universe by going contrary to that which is good.

Some still ask, “Why wouldn’t an omnipotent God prevent Lucifer from becoming evil?” God cannot *stop* a

creature from becoming evil without doing violence to its will. He can encourage the creature to stay away from evil and warn them of the consequences, but to stop them from opposing His will would make the creature nothing less than a robot.

Because God honors the will of His creatures, He attempts to use *persuasion* to convince them to stay away from the paths of destruction. When the creature fails to heed God's truth (and Satan did not continue in the truth), it is then that God demonstrates His almighty power in bringing down His opposition (Isa. 14:15). About appointing church leaders, Paul writes, "*Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*" (1 Tim. 3:6). God demonstrates His omnipotence, not by violating free-will, but punishing those who misuse it (Matt. 25:41).

The Tempter Produces Offspring

You've heard the saying, "Misery loves company." Satan wants others to share in his sin and its eternal consequences. He convinced numerous angels to rebel and later deceived men into following him. Through fallen men, he can take the world on a certain course:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

Remember, the word “worketh” means “to be operative or to put forth power.” Satan reproduces himself in God’s creation and energizes them to sin. Satan is disobedient to God and produces children who are like him. Sin is disobedience to God and obedience to Satan. The New Living Translation says, “*You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.*” If all of God’s creatures truly obeyed God then there would be no evil. Evil exists because many of God’s creatures are disobedient. It is because many are children of disobedience that they shall incur God’s wrath (Eph. 5:6).

Evil is also a perversion of God’s righteous and holy ways. When confronting a sorcerer on the isle of Paphos, Paul said:

*But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, **thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?** (Acts 13:8-10)*

Evil is an *enemy* of God’s righteousness and a *perverter* of God’s right way. Those who practice such are children of the devil, thus fully demonstrating that evil has its direct origin with him. If God was responsible for evil, or if he ordained it, then it should never be considered an *enemy* or a *perversion*. Much of the “mystery” is eliminated when we understand this.

John clearly states that the sin that is in the world is not God's doing. John says that Satan is the offending agent: "*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the evil one*" (1 John 5:19; English Majority Text Version).

The Reason Why We Need a New Birth

The Bible gives an avid description of fallen man's condition. God told Adam that disobedience would bring an experience of *death* (Gen. 2:15-17). Adam did not die *physically*, but he was driven from God's presence. He no longer had access to the life of God.

Adam's descendants are dead in sins and are following Satan's course. This is due to their inherent nature. They are, by nature, the children of wrath. The God's Word translation says, "*All of us once lived among these people, and followed the desires of our corrupt nature. We did what our corrupt desires and thoughts wanted us to do. So, because of our nature, we deserved God's anger just like everyone else.*" On these passages, Albert B. Simpson wrote,

We were born of Satan, his offspring spiritually, and his willing, helpless subjects. Many do not like this, but it is the plain teaching of the Scriptures that the natural man is at once the offspring and slave of Satan.⁴

If the Tempter has imparted his nature into fallen man then this naturally makes him the father of all sin and evil. Those who sin and are under the condemnation of sin are children of the devil and need to be "born again." As we read 1 John 3:9, 10 again, we find one of the distinctions between God's children and Satan's:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he

cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. (1 John 3:9, 10)

The primary thing that distinguishes the child of God is the “new birth” by Jesus Christ through the agency of the precious Holy Spirit. Those who follow Satan are, by nature, the children of wrath. God’s children receive God’s nature by a new birth. The Amplified Bible says:

No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, for God's nature abides in him [His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him]; and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God. By this it is made clear who take their nature from God and are His children and who take their nature from the devil and are his children: no one who does not practice righteousness [who does not conform to God's will in purpose, thought, and action] is of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother (his fellow believer in Christ). (Amplified Bible)

The Good News Bible also says, “*Those who are children of God do not continue to sin, for God's very nature is in them; and because God is their Father, they cannot continue to sin*” (1 John 3:9; GNB). God makes distinctions between those who are born of Him and those who are born of Satan. People possess the nature of the one from whom they are born. Peter wrote:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Pet. 1:4)

The Jewish New Testament says, “so that through them you might come to share in God's nature and escape the corruption which evil desires have brought into the world.” Here we see that born again Christians become partakers of God’s divine nature.

God’s nature is one that avoids corruption and evil, which mean He could not be the father of any other nature. Satan can reproduce himself in fallen men and he is the originator of all evil. Those who have God’s nature escape the world’s corrupt and evil desires.

The Tempter has his children under his power (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12-14) and they are powerless to resist his temptations. However, since Christians possess God’s divine nature, they are well able to resist and overcome the Tempter. Yet, we find “Christians” not only seem to fall into his snare, they are unaware of how to actually resist sin. They do not realize that the tempter especially targets Christians with an unsurpassed fierceness. As you will see, Satan’s intent is to destroy God’s people (John 10:10).

Christians must overcome their ignorance of Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:10, 11). One of his tactics is to blame God as the force behind our sins. Due to the prevalence of this false idea, we have taken significant space to refute it from the scripture. The rest of this book is dedicated to an expose of the rest of the Tempter’s tactics as well as his motives, and how to overcome them victoriously and successfully.

Chapter Six

Why the Tempter Tempts (Part 1)

Why does the Tempter put forth so much of his limited time and energy to tempt men? What does he seek to gain from his efforts? It is important to answer this question in order to understand why we are subject to such fierce attacks on a consistent basis. In these next two chapters, we will look at the seven reasons for satanic temptation.

1. He Is At War with God

While the Tempter's assaults are personal, we are not His primary target: God is. The Tempter hates God. He is unable to directly assault God so he assaults those made in His image. We see this in the book of Job:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put

forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face
(Job 1:6-11).

Verse 8 says, “*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job.*” Most English Bibles translate this passage with the idea that God intentionally brought Job to Satan’s attention. Some Bible teachers have erroneously used this passage to teach that God was planning to use Satan as his *servant* to test Job and intentionally dangled him before the devil as a carrot before a rabbit. However, if we know the true character of God then we would recoil at such a belief because this would make Him appear to be a “tempter” by tempting the devil to do His alleged dirty work.

Verse 8 need not be understood in the sense that God was *using* the devil to test Job. A number of scholars, commentators, and translations state that the literal meaning in Job 1:8 is “set your heart against” rather than “considered.” One of the several examples of this can be found in **Young’s Literal Translation**:

*And Jehovah saith unto the Adversary,
‘Hast thou set thy heart against My servant
Job because there is none like him in the
land, a man perfect and upright, fearing
God, and turning aside from evil?’*

In Young’s Literal Translation the word “against” is used. Webster’s Dictionary defines this word as “In opposition; noting enmity or disapprobation.” From this we see that God is not simply asking Satan if he ever had a chance to observe Job. God knew that Satan already had malignant designs for Job’s destruction and was bringing this to his attention.

Notice also the word “because” in the passage. It is the same word that is translated as “that” in the King James Version. According to Strong’s Concordance, the Hebrew word is “*kiy*” and it is, “A primitive particle.... indicating *causal* relations of all kinds.”¹ In other words, what follows “that” or “because” is the cause of Satan considering or setting his heart on Job.

God is not dangling Job before Satan in a way to simply “brag” on his servant, but taking a small liberty to rephrase Young’s translation, God is asking Satan, “Because there is none like him in the land, a man perfect and upright, fearing God, and turning aside from evil, hast thou set thy heart against My servant Job?” In other words, He is asking Satan “Job is in your rifle sniper scope, isn’t he?” In his commentary, Albert Barnes says:

Margin, "Set thine heart on." The margin is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Schultens remarks on this, that it means more than merely to observe or to look at - since it is abundantly manifest from the following verses that Satan “had” attentively considered Job, and had been desirous of injuring him. It means, according to him, to set himself against Job, to fix the heart on him with an intention to injure him, and Yahweh means to ask whether Satan had done this.²

When God asked Satan where he had been, Satan boldly claimed that he was “*going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*” Satan, who is the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and has certain rights upon the earth (Luke 4:5, 6) has a purpose. Our “*adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8).

Satan is looking for people to destroy. After God asks Satan about Job, his response betrays the fact that he had already been looking at Job and had already set his heart on him, but was unable to get to him. Satan accuses

Job of worshipping God only for the blessings that he received. *Accusation* is one of the tactics that the Tempter uses in his ongoing work. Satan wants to destroy God's confidence in Job and mankind in general. Satan is then permitted to bring a number of tragedies into Job's life to tempt him to curse and forsake God.

When we read the book of Job, we see that Satan's war is with God. His desire is to destroy God's credibility in front of the rest of the universe. We are byproducts of that war. Satan hates God and we were created in God's image so he hates us. He wants to discredit God by proving that you and I are only here to worship Him for what He can do for us and not because we love Him. This is seen in his accusations against both God and Job.

Satan does not believe that anyone would really worship God from anything more than a selfish motive. He believes everyone is as malignant as he is. Job proved him wrong. Every time we resist his temptations then we also prove Satan wrong and vindicate our Father.

2. The Tempter Desires Your Worship

We know that the Tempter's desire has always been to be like the Most High (Isa. 14:14). Along with his desire to attain to this position, he naturally desires the worship that comes with it:

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is

written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Luke 4:5-8).

Notice that the Tempter longed for the worship of the very Son of God Himself. Satan attempted to extract worship from the second person of the Triune Godhead. If he would desire the worship of God Himself, how much more would he desire such from those created in God's image? This is exactly what he desires and receives from so many on the earth:

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:4-8).

The Bible tells us that the dragon and Satan are one and the same, “*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world*” (Rev. 12:9). However, just as

the Tempter uses *accusation* as a tactic to tempt men and “prove” to God that they serve Him for selfish purposes, he uses *deception* to move men to worship him: Deception is another one of the Tempter’s most useful and successful tools in his ongoing work of tempting men and women (Gen. 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:14). This is the exact opposite of God. Jesus told a Samaritan woman,

*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship the Father in spirit and in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must worship him in spirit and in truth** (John 4:23, 24).*

Unlike the Tempter, God does not pull the wool over our eyes: God reveals the *truth* about Himself and His purposes because He desires TRUE worshippers who worship in both spirit and in TRUTH!! In his word studies, A. T. Robertson says that the word “seeketh” is, “*zeitei*.” Robertson says, “The Father has revealed himself in the Son who is the truth (John 14:6, John 14:9). It does matter whether we have a true conception of God whom we worship.”³ God has no need to deceive us. When we learn the truth about our kind, loving God who cares immensely for our spiritual and physical well being, we will want to worship Him (Psalm 57:9-11; 86:15; 100:1-5; 108:1-5; 111:1-10; 138:2; 145:18).

God wants our “true” or “sincere worship” and tells us the truth about Himself. Satan wants our worship and does not care how it comes. He is not reluctant to deceive people in order to get it. Knowing the truth about God leads one to a sincere desire to worship Him and knowing the truth about Satan opens our eyes and the thought of worshipping him becomes repugnant.

Furthermore, Jesus told the Samaritan woman that God seeks *true* worshippers while Satan *deceives* and *forces* people to worship him. The Apostle John said, “...and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.” The word *power* in Rev. 13:7 comes from the Greek word *exousia*. Strong’s dictionary says this word means, “force, capacity, competency, freedom, or (objectively) mastery (concretely magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control), delegated influence.”

Satan will extract the worship of these people by “force” and “control.” God seeks men to worship Him by revealing the truth about Himself, thereby seeking genuine and sincere worship that is not coerced or forced.

3. The Tempter Desires Your Enslavement

When we persistently sin, we are, often without realizing it, worshiping the devil. We become his slaves when we continually yield to his temptations. Many people do not realize that serving and worship are synonymous. However, we read in Romans 12:1, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*”

Offering our bodies as living sacrifices is symbolic of the type of worship performed in the Old Testament in which animal sacrifices were offered. Furthermore, the word “service” here is “*latreia*” and means, “ministration of God, that is, worship: - (divine) service.” In his word studies, Robertson says this: “Your rational (spiritual) service (worship).”⁴

Whoever we offer such obeisance to, devote ourselves to, and enslave ourselves to will be the object of our worship. If we offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices, we are serving Him and therefore worshipping

Him. If we offer ourselves to sin then we are a slave to it. Earlier in the book of Romans Paul wrote, “*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*” (Rom 6:16). The Apostle John says, “*He that committeth sin is of the devil*” (1 John 3:8).

The same people to whom Jesus said, “*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*” (John 8:34) had a select group among them to whom He said ten verses later, “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*” (John 8:44). Therefore, the Tempter not only tempts us to sin because of he wants to be *worshipped*, but he also wants our *enslavement*. The first murder was committed over the issue of worship:

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him (Gen. 4:3-8).

In verse seven God speaks of sin, not as a *thing* but as a *person*: “*sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire.*” While in most cases we understand sin as an idea and an act, in this case it is a *person*, a person intent on ruling and enslaving the individual who is willing to open the door to him. No doubt sin, in this case, is a reference to Satan himself.

Verse seven in the Bible in Basic English says, “*If you do well, will you not have honour? and if you do wrong, sin is waiting at the door, desiring to have you, but do not let it be your master.*” It is our choice as to whether or not sin *masters* us (Rom. 6:13, 14). If sin masters us then we become a slave to its author, Satan. This is exactly what happened to Cain: “*Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*” (1 John 3:12).

Cain yielded to sin and became a slave to the wicked one. God's Word to Cain shows us that it was *not* His will for Cain to be taken captive by the devil. The Tempter has his own “will” that is opposed to God and many are taken captive by it when they continue in sin (2 Tim. 2:25-26). It is never God's will that we are in bondage to sin and Satan, but that we are free from his enslavement (Psalm 19:13; 119:133; Mat. 6:13; Luke 4:18; 13:16; John 8:31-16; Acts 10:38; 26:18; Rom. 6:1-18; 8:2; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 1:12-14; 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8; 5:18, 19; Rev. 1:5). This is why God provides every means by which we can resist temptation and remain free from the Tempter's chains.

4. The Tempter Desires Your Destruction

As we read Gen. 4:7 we learn how Satan can get a foothold in our lives. The Contemporary English Version says, “*If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling. But you did the wrong thing, and now sin is*

waiting to attack you like a lion. Sin wants to destroy you, but don't let it!" Peter told us that we are to *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8).

Contrast this again with what Jesus said, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him"* (John 4:23). Both the Father and the Tempter are "seekers." We need to be "seeker sensitive," at least in the case of God and the devil. While one is seeking someone to *devour*, the other is seeking people in order to *deliver* them:

For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day (Eze. 34:11-12).

Both God and Satan are seeking men and women. One is seeking men for the express purpose of destroying them and the other seeking them so that they can worship Him sincerely and he in turn can deliver and bless them. There is a wide difference in the character of the Tempter and our God. One is concerned only for your destruction and the other is concerned for your well being.

God tells us to flee temptation and not to yield to sin. This is not because He wants to keep us from enjoying life but because God knows that sin opens the door to satanic attack and destruction in our lives. Paul wrote, *"Be ye angry, and **sin not**: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither **give place to the devil**"* (Eph.

4:26, 27). We can open doors for the devil through sin, which brings turmoil and destruction (1 Kings 13:33, 34).

Sin opens the door for Satan and his destructive vices but God is looking forward to rescuing us from the consequences of our foolishness:

Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions (Psalm 107:17-20).

It has always perplexed me that so many teach the erroneous idea that God “wills” for His people to suffer sickness, disease, tragedy and death. If this were true then God would also have to “will” the sin that brings such devastation. However, we have shown in the previous chapters that God is not the author of sin, nor does He “will” our sin. God desires our obedience and blessing.

We see that sickness, disease, tragedy and death is not the result of “God’s will” but it is the result of *fools* doing things *against* God’s will. It is “*because of their transgressions and iniquities that they are afflicted.*” Yet God cares so much about His people that He will rescue us from the consequences of our sin the very moment we cry out to Him and ask for His help (see also James 5:14-16). God cannot will our sin and its results if He is willing to save us from them.

The Tempter tries to blind us to these facts, just as he did with Eve (Gen. 3:1-7). Satan deceived Eve into believing that God is an egotistical tyrant who lies about the consequences of sin. He led her to believe that God

wanted her obedience for His own selfish reasons. He then gave her a picture of sin as something that would be *beneficial* to her. In his temptation, he will attempt to deceive us into believing that something good will come from our sin. Sin may bring some temporary pleasure but nothing good comes from it. The Psalmist says that our sin will cause us to “*draw near unto the gates of death.*” Sin only brings eternal and eventually physical death (Rom. 6:20-23; James 1:13-16; etc.).

Our Sovereign God does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3) but He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Eze. 33:10, 11). God does not “will” our death and destruction. Scripture says that He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Do not believe the lies of the Tempter concerning God and sin. God is good and sin is bad. God loves you and the tempter hates you. God wants you blessed and Satan wants you destroyed (John 10:10). However, as a free moral agent, you must make the choice and live with the consequences (Deut. 30:15, 19).

Conclusion

We have seen that Satan tempts because of his vendetta against God, his desire for worship, his desire for our enslavement, and his desire to destroy us. In the next chapter we will look at three more reasons why the Tempter works very hard to tempt and destroy men.

Chapter Seven

Why the Tempter Tempts (Part 2)

There are seven reasons why the Tempter uses his limited time and energy to tempt and bring the downfall of men and women, especially Christians. We discussed four of these in the last chapter. In this chapter we will look at three more reasons.

5. The Tempter Desires To Destroy Your Faith

Peter's tells us that Satan is seeking people that he can devour (1 Pet. 5:8-10). Peter learned this truth from practical experience. Just before the Lord Jesus went to the cross for our redemption, He spoke to Peter about a desire that Satan had to bring destruction in his life:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31, 32).

Our Lord knew that failure in our faith is the thing that leads to defeat in times of temptation. Having learned from his experience, Peter, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would later give us heartfelt instruction on how we can successfully overcome the devil: “Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:9). Peter gave in to the temptation of Satan, and it would seem that through a moment of unbelief, he denied his Lord.¹ His experience qualifies him to teach others how to resist the devil. When we resist the devil then we are keeping him from gaining a foothold into our lives.

Some modern translations make Peter's point much clearer:

Refuse to give in to him, by standing strong in your faith. You know that your Christian family all over the world is having the same kinds of suffering (New Century Version).

When we are walking in faith in God and His Word then we will not give in to temptation and sin. Every temptation of the devil is meant to undermine our faith and take away our reliance upon God. The Bible says, "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). All sin finds its roots in unbelief. God considers unbelief such a great sin that those who practice it will be condemned to an eternal damnation (Rev. 21:8). It is this sin that kept the Israelites from the land of promise:

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Heb. 3:17-19).

The writer of Hebrews uses "sin" and "unbelief" as synonymous terms. Is it any wonder then that Satan targets our faith? He knows that a failure of our faith is a *sin* which keeps us from all that God has for us. Satan destroyed the faith of these Israelites through words (see Num. 13:26-33; 14:28-30). The Tempter's words are designed to destroy faith in God's goodness and love.

In contrast to the Tempter, God desires our blessing and protection and speaks words aimed towards building our faith to accomplish this. In the very beginning of man's existence God gave a faith building Word to Adam (Gen. 2:17).

God wanted Adam and Eve to continue to believe His Word so that He could continue to bless them. God's desire is to strengthen our faith in His generosity and His desire for our well being. God told Adam that he could eat from every tree except ONE. That is generosity on full display. God warned Adam about the one tree because he was concerned for his well being. God's Word was intended to build faith in His gracious character. The Tempter has an opposite goal for man. He is at war with God and man and his greatest weapons are words of unbelief, which is the very weapon he used (Gen. 3:3-5).

One of the reasons that a failure of faith is such a great sin is because it is questioning not only God's abundant unselfish love and generosity, but it is also questioning His integrity (see 1 John 5:10). The person who fails to believe what God has said is saying, "God, you are a LIAR!" This is the thought that the Tempter planted in the mind of Eve, and it is the same thoughts he continues to plant in men and women today.

Satan knows that if a Christian walks in the fullness of their faith then they can overcome him each and every time. That is why he must target your faith. Both God and Satan targets faith. One does it to build and strengthen faith while the other attempts to tear down and destroy faith. When we are fully trusting God, He can work in and through us for His divine purposes, which brings damage to the already defeated dark kingdom. When the devil is able to destroy our faith, then he can hurt the cause of Christ in some significant way.

Any suggestion that comes to you in thought or from another that undermines God's integrity and

questions His goodness is an obvious attack from the devil himself. These must be resisted by learning and positively confessing God's faith building Word.

6. The Tempter Desires Your Eternal Destruction

James said, "*Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, **bringeth forth death***" (James 1:15). What does James mean by sin "bringing forth death"? Scripture and experience demonstrate that most "Christians" who fall into sin do not usually die physically – at least not immediately. God told Adam that if he ate the forbidden fruit that he would die that very day (Gen. 2:17). However, we know that Adam did not physically die during that 24 hour period but lived for 930 years (Gen. 5:5). The death here has to be a reference to *separation* from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 2:1-5). Apart from repentance, this death is eternal:

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14, 15).

This is the same everlasting death that Satan himself will be experiencing (Rev. 20:10a; see also Matt. 25:41). Jesus has defeated Satan through His redemptive sacrifice. Nevertheless, the devil still believes he has a chance to defeat God. If he cannot defeat God then he intends to do his best to break God's heart by taking as many of those He loves with him to his doom.

A number of very popular Evangelicals teach what has been labeled "eternal security" or "Once Saved, Always Saved" (also known as OSAS). Certainly, one should be secure in their salvation because it is a salvation purchased by the blood of Jesus and not by our attempts

to perform works of righteousness. However, those turn the security that the blood provides into a license to sin will find themselves in serious danger.

Years ago while in the military I spent a year in South Korea. Korea is divided into two countries (North and South). The North was considered the enemy, and we were protected from them by our armed forces that guard the borders that separated the two. As long as I stayed on the south side of the border I could rest in my security (which I did). Suppose I decided to flirt with temptation by going to the border and jumping between the two sides? Sooner or later a North Korean soldier could possibly catch me on his side, arrest me, and place me in a North Korean prison. With all their great might and fighting power, the U. S. Armed Forces cannot help me.

As long as I stayed on the south side of the Korean border, I was secure. Once I moved to the other side of the border then I risked my security. The same is true concerning our salvation. When we flirt with sin we are in danger of falling into the clutches of our enemy, and we are in danger of following him to his eternal destiny. Satan knows this and he will not only entice us to sin, but he will even move otherwise good Christian leaders to teach a false security that leads one to believe that they can remain saved and heaven bound regardless of how much they sin and rebel against God.

The devil lied when he told Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” and he continues to tell this lie to many of God’s people today. Temptation can lead to sin, which leads to death, and the lake of fire is the second death. Rev. 20:10 says that “*whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” The same Jesus who shed His blood to secure our salvation also said that people whose names are written in the book of life can be blotted out of it if they do not remain faithful to Him:

*And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and **art dead**. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and **I will not blot out his name out of the book of life**, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (Rev. 3:1-5).*

Those who *overcome* will not have their names blotted out of the book of life. This means that there is a possibility that one's name can be blotted out. God told Moses:

*And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, **Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book** (Exodus 32:31-33).*

Those who have sinned against God will be blotted out of His book. Only those whose names are in the book of life get in (Rev 21:27). While Christians should not be in fear of losing their salvation at every slip of yielding to the flesh, neither should they believe that grace gives them a license to sin. To do so would be to place their eternal souls in jeopardy. This is exactly what the Tempter wants. Do not give it to him.

7. The Tempter Wants to Destroy Your Witness

Finally, Satan brings temptation our way because he knows that our godly lives would be a testimony for Christ. Our godly lives coupled with our witness to the lost enables them to hear the good news. The Tempter desires to keep the gospel hid:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:3, 4)

It is clear from this passage that Satan is the one attempting to keep men and women from hearing the truth concerning Jesus and His redemptive work on their behalf. There are some who teach a doctrine of “predestination.” Satan has perverted the Biblical teaching of predestination in order to lead many to believe that God has destined some to be saved and an even larger portion to be lost.

A study of Scripture teaches just the opposite. There is no predestination to heaven or hell. The Tempter is the only one attempting to have the gospel hidden while God wants it proclaimed openly and publicly. Unlike the

Tempter, God does not want anyone in hell and He is doing all that He possibly can do to prevent this. God is *pleading* with the world through us:

*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though **God did beseech you by us:** we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20).*

God is making an appeal through us. He desires the salvation of men and women intensely. This appeal is not made only by our words but how we conduct ourselves in the world and how we represent our Savior.

It is clear from Scripture and life that the way we live in the world makes a difference as to whether or not some will ever embrace our Savior. Our conduct in front of others is detrimental to the salvation of many. Too many already point to the “hypocrites” that they have seen in the church and use this as their excuse for rejecting salvation through Christ alone. The Tempter is looking for us to misrepresent the Lord to those under the dominion of darkness. He desires the eternal condemnation of as many as possible. One of the ways he succeeds is by ensuring that the “lights” God has placed in the world cover themselves in the darkness of sin.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be

salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Mat. 5:13-16).

Notice that letting your light shine by being the “Jesus” that people need to see, our Father is glorified. We learned earlier that Satan is jealous of the glory of God and would do all that he can in order to prevent this. If he can destroy our witness in the world he can succeed in keeping the unsaved in the dark, thus keeping them from glorifying our Father. Therefore, he must tempt us to sin so that he can destroy our testimony.

Look at David’s adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah. David’s sin did to hurt him alone, but it also hurt the cause of God. Instead of glorifying God for David’s good works (and David had done many), unbelievers began to blaspheme the Lord:

*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, **because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme**, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die (2 Sam. 12:13, 14).*

Some centuries later the Apostle Paul would tell his legalistic Jewish audience, *“Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? **For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written**”* (Rom. 2:23, 24). The Tempter realizes that when we live lives of hypocrisy and sin while proclaiming Christianity then we give the unbelievers occasion, not to glorify God as many might if they saw us do good works. How many times have people cursed God because of the way “Christians” conduct themselves. By tempting God’s people into sin the Tempter is able to blind the minds of men. In another epistle, Paul says that a Christian’s conduct gives God’s enemies not only an occasion to reproach (or slander God), but that such a person aligns themselves with Satan himself (1 Tim. 5:11-15).

When we engage in this warfare against sin and Satan, we must keep in mind that our constant battle to overcome the Tempter and his temptations is not for our sakes alone. There are people that are watching us. Our words about how good the Lord is and their need to receive Him is meaningless if we fail to conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with Christianity. It has been said that the famous Civil Rights leader of India, Mahatmas Gandhi, would have become a Christian if he had seen Christians act like the Christ of the Bible.

While we may not be able to reach well known leaders and dignitaries, we can certainly work within our limited sphere of influence. For example, Christian spouses can have a great influence on their unsaved spouses by the way that they conduct themselves:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (1 Pet. 3:1, 2).

Those married to non-Christians have a special mission field. Your spouse is your primary mission. Most unsaved spouses are not impressed with their Christian spouse's church attendance, financial giving and religious talk when they are temperamental, mean, and unforgiving. The Scripture says that an unsaved spouse can be won by the Christian spouse's conversation, or their way of living. In my own ministry, I have seen unsaved and backsliding spouses change after they saw their Christian spouse actually begin to live what they preach.

Whether we are attempting to win a spouse, other family member or any other person within our sphere of influence, we must recognize that our conduct will be one of the major factors (though we must also share the gospel). It is not easy to always live a holy life, and we were never promised that it would be. We are in warfare. This warfare is against sin. This warfare is also to rescue lost souls that are in bondage to the kingdom of darkness. If we are to move others towards glorifying God, we must go to war against temptation and the desires of the flesh:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them

that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. 2:11-15)

Some years ago when I was in the Air Force, there were several occasions in which I was verbally abused by my superiors due to some errors on some reports submitted. This was often done in front of my peers. However, when this happened, I would walk away with a smile on my face. My peers knew that I was a Christian. They were so impressed with my reactions in the face of difficulty that they began to come to me for advice and encouragement when they encountered problems and difficulties in their lives.

There was one particular young lady who said after one of these abusive incidents, “Troy, I know that God must be with you. If that had happened to me then I would be crying. However, you laugh.” This same lady began going to church with me and remained faithful.

The Tempter knows how the heart of God longs for the salvation of all mankind (Eze. 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:16, 17; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2) and how there is so much joy in Heaven when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7, 10). By contrast, God is grieved over those who are lost (Judges 10:16; Isa. 63:9; Hos. 11:8; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41-44). What brings God joy is the thing that brings Satan's misery. That which breaks God's heart is the thing that brings Satan much delight. Therefore, if he can successfully lead us into temptation and destroy our witness, and in the course of this destroy any chance that those who are watching us would ever want to know our God, he will have accomplished his primary objective. Don't let him.

Chapter Eight

The Tempter's Tactic: The "Look" of Lust

*Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and **sheweth** him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matt. 4:8-9).*

The Tempter tempts by making use of our five senses (taste, touch, smell, hearing, and seeing). In this chapter, we will focus on the Tempter's use of visual stimulation to tempt and entice.

How Temptation Is Conceived

The eye gate is a primary source of temptation. Notice that the devil "showeth" Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. The Tempter showed Jesus these kingdoms in order to entice Him to desire what He saw so badly that He would fall down and worship.

Satan believed that such a tactic would work on Jesus because he has used this tactic successfully throughout history. We have referenced the temptation of Eve several times in this book. Nonetheless, there is much insight that we can draw from this event, such as how Satan used *visual stimulation* to bring man's downfall:

*And when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, and that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband*

with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons (Gen. 3:6, 7).

Notice that the woman “saw” something and that it was “pleasant to the eyes.” As we read in Matthew 4, the devil *showed* Jesus and Eve *saw*. It takes two to make the enticement work – Satan *showing* and our *seeing*.

Once we have allowed our *seeing* to turn into an act of sin, then our spiritual eyes will be opened, and we will see the horror of our rebellion against God. The Tempter loves to work this way. He will never tell you about the shame and degradation that accompanies sin. He will only promote its potential pleasure. It is only after we have yielded to the temptation that we discover how naked we are. Satan will make sure that tons of condemnation is heaped upon us. James sums it up clearly for us concerning the conception of sin and tells us exactly how the process works:

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:14, 15).

The Tempter is an expert and can tailor every temptation according to his victim’s desires. He knows exactly what to tempt each person with. Once he has placed the object of lust before our eyes, he will give us reasonable arguments for giving in to what our eyes are seeing. At this juncture, we have to make a choice: we can cast down the enticing idea and subsequent arguments placed in our minds for yielding to it (2 Cor. 10:3-5) or

we can dwell on it, yield to it, allow conception of the sin into our hearts and deal with the shameful consequences.

The World and the Lust of the Eyes

Another example of how the “look of lust” can entice us is found in the story of Lot. Lot was a righteous man who allowed himself to be drawn into the world:

And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) (2 Pet. 2:7, 8)

Now how did Lot get himself into this situation? How do we find this righteous man around wicked people and allowing himself to be tormented by their evil? Though Lot was a righteous man, he made the mistake that many otherwise sincere Christians make by yielding to the “look of lust.” The look of lust caused Lot to place worldly material gain ahead of his relationship with God:

*And Lot **lifted up his eyes, and beheld** all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot **chose him all the plain of Jordan**; and Lot journeyed east: and **they separated themselves** the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and **pitched his tent toward Sodom**. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners*

before the LORD exceedingly (Gen. 13:10-13).

Notice that Lot's yielding to worldly enticements began with an "eye" problem. 1 John 2:16 tells us, "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*" Sodom and Gomorrah is a *type* of the world that has Satan as its god and ruler. Lot seemed to believe that the material gain that he desired could only be achieved as he moved as close to the "world" as possible.

When Lot "lifted up his eyes" the lust of the eyes drew him closer to the world. Afterwards he "chose all the plain of Jordan" and the lust of the flesh drew him even further. Finally, he pitched his tent and made his home as close to the world as possible.

How many times have we gone out with the company executives for a few drinks in order to get a needed promotion and pay raise? Because we are Christians we thought that we might just hang out and drink a soda while they drank alcohol. We felt that we can keep our conversation clean no matter how dirty they talk. Perhaps we even thought that this may be an opportunity to witness. We are able to do this successfully the first time, but as we continue making such compromises in order to get promotions and pay raises, we find ourselves missing church activities and other Christian events in order to attend office parties. We miss Sunday services in order to golf with the boss. Continuing down this path eventually leads to the complete separation of ourselves (v. 11) from those who could keep us spiritually and morally encouraged. Like Lot, we begin walking a thin line and find ourselves no longer being enticed by the world, but actually *in* the world: "*And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt **in** Sodom, and his goods, and departed*" (Gen. 14:12).

Steps towards Drawing Closer to the World

Lot's problem started with a "look." Not a simple *glance* but he actually *beheld* the plains of Jordan. This means he was looking at them lustfully. Lot became caught up with the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. This "look of lust" took him on a progressive downward slide. In Genesis 14:12 we find Lot *dwelling* in Sodom (the world). This is a man who began as a believer but is now in the world.

As we read further, we find this man has achieved a great position in the world, "...and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom." (Gen. 19:1) This is the last principle of the world found in 1 John 2:16 which is "the pride of life." Once we have gone back into the world, then we can receive all that the world has to offer us. However, these things only last for a season. Lot reaped the unrighteous fruit for his worldly selfishness. He lost his godly witness (Gen. 19:14), he lost his wife (Gen. 19:26), he lost all of his material possessions (Gen. 19:29), and he became the father of two of Israel's greatest enemies (Gen. 19:37-38). Now is this worth the prosperity the world has to offer? All of this started from a "look."

David and the Look of Lust

Eve and Lot are not the only examples of how the "look" has been used by the Tempter to entrap and destroy his potential prey. King David, to whom the Bible says was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22) was defeated by the enemy using the "look of lust:"

*And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he **saw** a woman washing herself; and the woman was **very beautiful to look upon** (2 Samuel 11:2)*

This is similar to Eve's temptation. Eve saw that the tree was "pleasant to the eyes" and King David saw that "the woman was very beautiful to look upon." Notice that David "saw" and "looked." He was on safe ground when he only "saw." At this point he could have turned his head and went in a different direction. We cannot always help *seeing* something. Our mistake is when we continue *looking*. The enticement of King David began when he "saw" but the slippery slope into sin began when he looked. David's own son, Solomon later wrote, "*Lust not after her beauty in thine heart...*" (Prov. 6:25).

Nevertheless, David still had a chance to be victorious. He could have asked God to forgive him for looking at this woman and lusting after her. No harm would have been done. Sadly, we read in the next verse, "*And David sent and enquired after the woman*" (2 Sam. 11:3). When we begin *inquiring* about the source of our temptation, it is because we have given in to the lust.

After receiving the answer (that she was the wife of one of his most faithful soldiers who was out fighting a war for him), we still find the sad results of allowing the lust to be conceived and sin being brought forth:

And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house (2 Sam. 11:4).

David has gone beyond temptation to sin in the heart. After the sin has entered the heart it will manifest itself physically and become a sin of the flesh. There is no sin in being tempted; the sin begins in *dwelling* upon the temptation, allowing it to enter our hearts, which sooner or later will manifest itself physically. David went through each stage and finally committed adultery.

Still David could have redeemed some of this by confessing to this sin and repenting. However, this one act of sin led to further and more egregious acts. The woman David committed adultery with became pregnant. Unable to manipulate her husband into covering his sinful act, David committed murder. He killed the husband and then married the woman (Read 2 Samuel 11:5-27). Many times we commit one sin and that in turn leads to another. We commit adultery and then we will lie to cover it up. This usually leads to a seemingly endless cycle of sin, at least until the exposure and death finally sets in.

The Far Reaching Results of David's Sin

King David's "look" and subsequent yielding to the look caused him to reap terrible corruption (see Gal. 6:7, 8). David lost his peace and suffered a guilty conscience (Psalm 51:3), he suffered physically (Psalm 38:3-10), his son died (2 Samuel 12:10-15), one of his sons became a rapist (2 Samuel 13), and another son turned against him in rebellion (2 Sam. 15). Because of one sinful act, the sword never departed from David's house (2 Sam. 12:10). This was a man after God's own heart. All of this began with a "look of lust."

These things certainly were not the will of God for David and neither is it his will for anyone. God's will is for his children to live in peace with a clear conscience, to have divine physical and emotional health and to have children who grow up godly so that our homes are like days of heaven upon the earth. Sin can shorten one's life, but it is God's will that we have long life upon the earth (Prov. 3:2; Psalm 91:16; Numbers 23:26). Even if we do die as martyrs for the sake of the gospel, the Bible promises us many riches in heaven. When we sow to the Spirit, we reap of the Spirit everlasting life (Gal. 6:8). God wants His will done in our lives and this is why He warns us against the Tempter's look of lust.

Jesus Explains the Tempter’s “Look of Lust” Tactic

As we examine King David’s slip into temptation and sin, we can now understand our Lord Jesus’ strong teaching concerning the seriousness of “the look of lust:”

*But I say unto you, That **whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.** And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Mat. 5:28, 29)*

Jesus refutes the false idea held by the people of his time that sin did not begin until the physical act was committed. On the contrary, sin begins with the “look of lust.” To avoid legalism, we should understand that simply looking at someone and acknowledging their beauty is not sin. It is when we begin gazing and lusting after the individual that we sin.

The Greek word for “looketh” in the above passage is “*blepo*” which is to “behold” or “regard.” Some translations such as The World English Bible translate it as “to gaze upon.” This goes beyond a simple glance to acknowledge someone’s beauty. This is a person who is staring and undressing a person with their eyes.

Digging deeper, we learn that the Greek word translated as “lust” in this passage is “*epithumeo*” and the Strong’s Dictionary defines it as “to set the heart upon, that is, long for (rightfully or otherwise): - covet, desire, would fain, lust (after).” It is the same word for lust in 1 John 2:16 where we are again told, “*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*”

We sin when we begin to gaze upon an object and set our heart upon it. This is the look of lust that the Tempter uses to bring us down: We **l**ook, we **l**ust, we **l**et go of all moral restraint, we are **l**ed into sin, and our eternal **l**ife is snuffed out.

Breaking the Power of the Look of Lust

How do we overcome the Tempter and this tactic? Jesus offered us some very extreme instructions. He told us that if we cannot control our eyes, we must gouge them out. Some believe that Jesus was being metaphorical here. I do not agree. I believe that He was being literal. Jesus was saying that hell is such a horrible place that it is better to go blind than to go to hell with both eyes intact.

Now, before you go get the knife and start cutting your eyeballs out, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, gave some instruction to His servant Paul that will help us today, and save us a lot of physical pain and medical bills. If we learn to crucify the offending members of our body by God's Spirit, we can overcome the look of lust:

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the **lust** of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time*

*past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have **crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts** (Gal. 5:16-24).*

How do we crucify the flesh? One word: DECISION! We recognize what Christ has done on our behalf and the power of the Holy Spirit to identify with it by faith (Rom. 6:1-7). Afterwards we make up our minds that our offending members must be submitted to our authority (1 Cor. 9:27). Our eyes do not have to control us. We can control our eyes. It is simply by making a quality decision to do so. Job said, “*I made a covenant with my eyes not to **look with lust** upon a young woman*” (Job 31:1; Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Job made a decision by making a covenant with his eyes. A covenant is a binding agreement that can only be broken by death. Job made a binding agreement with his eyes that he will not engage in the “look of lust” when it came to women. When we make such decisions, the Tempter will attempt to move us into breaking the covenant, but he has no power to make us do so. When one makes a covenant, they are committed to it “come hell or high water.” Make a covenant with your eyes as Job did and stay committed to it.

The Look of Life

Finally, we need to focus our “looking” in the right direction. We are to look to Jesus, our leader and example in the walk of faith. Looking to Him is the primary way to set aside the sin that so easily besets us:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:1-4)

Earlier we told you that the Tempter uses our five physical senses in order to entice us into sin. Our *sight* is his primary target. God works from a different perspective. He expects us to use our *faith* (what we do not see with our physical eyes – 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1) in order to overcome the Tempter’s tactics. Faith looks towards the spiritual realm and is something higher than sight. Anyone can “believe what they see” but those who are spiritual will believe God’s commands and promises of victory over sin even when they do not yet physically see the results of His power.

Our faith is placed in Jesus and the example He provides us in His Word and through His precepts. We don’t always immediately see the results that God promises through His Word. This is where faith comes in. We believe that God will empower and enable us to overcome every temptation as Jesus did. We must decide to not “look” at the object of lust that the Tempter places before us but “look” by faith at the promises of God through our Lord Jesus.

Many people erroneously teach that Jesus being “the author and finisher of our faith” means that He somehow supernaturally imparts faith into us. However, the passage is speaking of the Lord as the leader and example of faith that we are to look to, not someone who zaps people with faith. Faith in God is the product of hearing, meditating, and adhering to God’s Word (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 1:12-13).

Since Jesus is no longer on the earth, the only way we can look unto Him is by looking into the Word of God in which we find His walk and His teachings. He suffered quite a bit of persecution on our behalf, leaving us an example to follow. As we look unto Him then we are able, as an act of our will, to lay aside every weight and sin that so easily besets us.

God has always called His people to “look unto Him” for salvation and help (Isa. 45:22). He also tells us the consequences of looking to any other thing besides Him (Isa. 31:1). This has never been a “physical” looking upon God nor an attempt at “visualization” (though we believe there is a place for such practices in the Christian walk) but a simple accepting of the example Jesus left us as recorded in the Scriptures as well as the promises that God has made concerning victory over sin. If we “look unto Jesus” and the example of faith that He left us then we will overcome the Tempter’s “look of lust” towards sin.

Chapter Nine

The Tempter's Attacks on Our Minds

*A servant of the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, he must be kind to everyone. He must be a good teacher. He must be willing to suffer wrong. He must be gentle in correcting those who oppose the Good News. Maybe God will allow them to change the way they **think and act** and lead them to know the truth. Then they might come back to their senses and God will free them from the devil's snare so that they can do his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26; God's Word Translation)*

God has endowed man with the power to make genuine choices that are not preprogrammed (Gen. 4:7; Deut. 11:26-28; 30:19; Joshua 24:15, 22; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 3:22; Matt. 11:28; 19:17; 23:37; John 5:40; 7:17; Acts 17:30-31; 26:20; Rom. 2:14-15 (NCV); 6:16-17; Heb. 7:25; James 4:5-8; Rev. 3:20 and many others). This ability to make un-coerced choices is called "free will."

The will must be free in order to make genuine choices. If it is not free then God would be unjust to hold men accountable for making choices that were preordained. If the will is not free then what we call a *choice* really is not. It is nothing more than a preprogrammed decision that was going to be made regardless of the alternatives presented. Scripture is clear that man's will is free and can submit to God or rebel against Him and serve Satan (James 4:7).

Our decisions are based on the information we receive and filter through our minds. Hence the majority

of the battle between God and Satan is over the minds of men. God wants free and willing submission (Isa. 1:18-20). He has given us a Bible that tells us exactly what it means to submit to Him, the blessings accrued from doing so, and the consequences for neglecting to do so. Satan's desire is to keep men from receiving this information.

The Fall of Man Due to Mind Corruption

The Tempter was already skilled in the power of suggestion, accusation and deception when man was created (Gen. 3:1-5). God gave a word to man that would keep him from being defeated by temptation (Gen. 2:16, 17), but Satan was able to counter God's Word by casting doubt upon it. The Tempter was able to work on the mind of Eve and deceive her.

Yet, deception is not an excuse for sin. Paul wrote, *“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”* (1 Tim. 2:14). Often we hear about people losing their life savings due to deceptions by subtle scams. Some of them are even swindled by so-called ministers. While such stories break our hearts, it does not relieve the victim of his or her responsibility for falling into the deception.

As we will see, Ananias and his wife were deceived by the Tempter. Satan planted an idea in his mind and made him believe that he could get away with it. Ananias was definitely deceived. Nonetheless, he was not excused on this basis and suffered the consequences of having followed a deception. We are held responsible for the deception that we allow into our lives.

Satan Keeps Mankind Lost By Mind Control

The same way that the Tempter was able to bring about the fall of man is the exact same way he keeps them fallen. He keeps them fallen by the corruption of their mind to sensual lusts and appetites:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3)

Another translation says, “*We did what our corrupt desires and **thoughts** wanted us to do*” (God's Word Translation). Just as the Tempter used sensual ideas to corrupt Eve's mind, he does the same thing to the lost today. He plants desires in the minds of men and women and they choose to act on them.

The Tempter wars with God by controlling the minds of those creatures He loves dearly. God wants all men to receive salvation and come into the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 2:1-4). Satan, on the other hand, wants to keep men from receiving this truth. This is to keep them from believing and to prevent their salvation (Luke 8:12):

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom **the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:3-5).*

How does the Tempter keep the lost under his control and in his kingdom of darkness? By keeping their minds blinded. Paul said, that those without Christ are those *“Having the **understanding darkened**, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”* (Eph. 4:18). However, God does not sit back idle and allow Satan to have his way unchallenged. God has provided the gospel which, if presented effectively, will penetrate the mind of the lost and allow them to see His perspective.

Anyone who claims that God has elected some to salvation and others to damnation by an eternal decree is giving Him credit for Satan's work. God says that it is not His desire that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Man's unbelief is due to a blinding process that Satan uses over them. Fallen mankind is indeed depraved, but not so depraved as to be unable to make a choice about what they will believe when they are given the information.

Satan Wants to Mind Control Christians

If it is truly our desire to reach the lost, we must pray for them fervently and seek creative ways to have the gospel penetrate their thinking. Every lost soul that we are able to snatch from Satan's kingdom is a victory for the Kingdom of Christ. That is why we must present the gospel. The gospel provides information that counters the deception of Satan in the minds of the lost.

Even so, the Tempter's work is not limited to the lost; he is also after the *believer's* mind in order to control it. Satan brought about the fall of the first man and woman by filling their mind with thoughts contrary to God's Word. Satan is able to corrupt our minds just as he did to Eve if we allow him: *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:3).

He was able to corrupt her mind through false information. He was attempting to do the exact same thing to the Corinthians by sending false apostles among them (2 Cor. 11:13-15). This continues to happen in our day. It is not limited to the well known cults but even among many so-called *orthodox* pulpits. As a matter of fact, dry powerless orthodoxy that denies the miraculous for today and credits God for the evil in this world, yet is readily accepted as “sound” teaching among the ecclesiastical elite, is much more dangerous to the believer than anything the Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and other well known cults have contrived.

The Tempter is a master at mimicry. He knows enough of the ways of God to imitate them and pervert them. He is counting on our ignorance of God’s ways in order to beguile us. He will plant thoughts by demon spirits, through false teachers, so called “sound” teachers, or a combination of all of them.

By allowing the Tempter to plant thoughts in our minds uncontested, we can unwittingly open the door for him to do things in our lives he otherwise would not be able to do. While Satan must often ask God for permission to test us (Luke 22:31), he also needs our permission to be able to bring things in our lives that we have been given complete authority over.

*But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, **why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine***

own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things (Acts 5:1-5).

The New Century Version renders verse 3 this way: *Peter said, "Ananias, **why did you let Satan rule your thoughts** to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep for yourself part of the money you received for the land? Our thoughts often dictate our actions. Therefore, if the Tempter controls our minds, he controls us. The Tempter controls our minds by planting thoughts, ideas, and suggestions that are contrary to God's Word.*

The Tempter's intention is to destroy the believer and his testimony and to deny God the glory due to Him. Satan also wants to discredit the church which is God's ambassador in this world that He loves and desires to save (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). He does it by infiltrating it through the thoughts of unprepared believers.

Judas' Betrayal of Jesus Was Due to Satanic Thoughts

Judas Iscariot is also an example of a genuine believer who was later beguiled by the Tempter. The Bible says, "*Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve*" (Luke 22:3). Luke states that Judas was among the twelve. According to Scripture, Judas was a genuine disciple and apostle of Jesus (Mat. 10:1-5; Luke 6:12-19; John 12:4). So how was it that Satan could "enter into Judas?" Like Ananias, Satan planted a thought in his heart. Judas made a decision of his own free will to act upon that thought:

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he

*should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, **the devil having now put into the heart** of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him (John 13:1, 2)*

J. B. Phillips renders verse 2 this way: “By supper-time, **the devil had already put the thought of betraying Jesus in the mind** of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son.” It is interesting how other translations render this passage. The God's Word Translation says that “*the devil had already put the **idea** of betraying Jesus into the mind of Judas*” and the Weymouth translation says, “*the Devil having by this time **suggested** to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, the thought of betraying Him, Jesus.*” From these we understand that Satan was able to “enter into Judas” and control him through placing in his mind “thoughts, ideas, and suggestions.”

Those who hold to a strict predestinarian doctrine believe that God Himself had preselected Judas to betray Christ long before he was ever born. Many believe that Judas had no choice but to fulfill that which was prophesied concerning him. This understanding comes from statements made by the inspired writers of Scripture that Judas was “fulfilling certain prophesies” (Mat. 27:9; John 13:18; 17:12; Acts 1:16-20).

While it is not our purpose to do an exhaustive study on Judas Iscariot or predestination, it is necessary for us to touch on this in order to refute the idea that God would decree and ordain sin, thus making Him a party to the works of Satan. When the New Testament writers use such phrases as “that the scripture might be fulfilled,” it is not always necessarily in reference to a specific prediction made concerning a particular person centuries before their birth. In many cases, it was simply a matter of paralleling

the past event recorded in Scripture with the event that was presently occurring. The writer was showing how the event that was happening to have its type in Scripture.

A number of scholars have also noted that a ‘fulfillment’ in Scripture is not necessarily a “future prediction” but a parallel event that has been noted. Well known Greek scholar and author A. T. Robertson writes the following in his commentary on Matthew:

Then was fulfilled. We have here a different form of statement from the familiar “that it might be fulfilled.” A similar construction appears in 27:9 in connection with the death of Judas Iscariot. In both instances it is a quotation from Jeremiah. There seems to be an apparent shrinking from saying that either event was a part of the purpose of God. All that the present language need mean is that what was mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah has come true again in the case of Bethlehem. The author does not attribute any essential Messianic idea to Jeremiah's words. The quotation is apparently made from memory from the LXX (Jer. 38:15, LXX ; 31:15 Hebrew).¹

An examination of the Old Testament texts that are fulfilled in the New Testament would be sufficient to prove that these scholars are correct. The Old Testament passages, when read apart from what we know about Judas, don't seem to hint at a reference to him. If Judas had not betrayed the Lord then there would have been no need to fulfill any of the Scriptures that are paralleled with his acts. Therefore, it is better to understand that the phrase “that the Scripture might be fulfilled” is not always the literal fulfillment of a particular prophecy concerning a specific person.

If God had predestined Judas to betray the Lord and suffer eternally for this heinous crime, then why is Satan given the credit for God's work? The truth is that

God had nothing to do with Judas' crime. This was Satan's doing. Judas willingly received and acted on the thought that was given to him by the devil, and would therefore, have to pay the price. Nevertheless, Satan, the Tempter, was the culprit who gave the ideas and suggestion to Judas in his attempt to kill the Lord. It was Satan who put the thought in Judas and not God. While God may overrule the evil acts of men and cause them to work into His plan, God is not a party to the sinful acts of men. This only means that God is unable to be defeated or thwarted by evil. It does not mean that He plans or desires evil.

God Takes No Credit for Wicked Thoughts

Other passages prove that God had no part in Judas' devilish thoughts nor does He have any part in the evil thoughts and actions of any other man (James 1:13). Rather than predestining man's sinful actions and thoughts, God admonishes men to forsake them:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD (Isa. 55:7, 8)

God makes a distinction between His actions and thoughts from the thoughts of men. If God were controlling the actions or thoughts of men then He would not be able to say the above. If God were controlling the thoughts and actions of men then He would have to admit that His ways and thoughts were their ways and thoughts. On the contrary, God admonishes them to repent of both so that He can extend mercy to them. Mercy is given upon

the condition that men would forsake both wicked thoughts and ways. Thoughts that are opposed to God are just as evil in his sight as sinful actions.

Paul says, “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7). God is not behind the wicked carnal thoughts of men. God declares the carnal mind to be an *enemy* and contradicting to His laws. The divisions in the Corinthian church were the result of yielding to carnal thoughts (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

Jesus taught that all sin starts with the thought life: “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*” (Mat. 15:19). In His sermon on the mount, Jesus took the moral law beyond the physical acts associated with them and taught us that breaking these laws begin with the “heart.” For example, adultery does not begin with the physical act, but begins with the lust in one’s heart for a particular woman (Matt. 5:27, 28).

The great Chinese preacher, Watchman Nee, wrote, “We cannot separate temptation and thought. All temptations are offered us in the form of thoughts. Since the latter are so exposed to the power of darkness, we need to learn how to guard them.”² If we are to have victory over Satan in every area of our lives we must learn how to defeat him in the arena of the thought life.

We Can Do Something about Our Thought Life

God told the Israelites to forsake their wicked thoughts. We should assume that God, being a just God, would never issue a directive in which we have no ability to obey. Satan is already a defeated foe, but if we want to experience the victory of Jesus experientially, then we must learn to overcome his attacks on our minds. We must learn to cast down all the Tempter’s ideas and suggestions that bombard our minds:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

Alternatively, as the New Century version says, “Our weapons have power from God that can destroy the enemy’s strong places.” This weapon that has power from God is “the word of God, which has living power in you who have faith” (1 Thess. 2:13; Bible in Basic English). Contrary to the popular belief in some Charismatic and Third Wave circles, the above passage is not teaching a doctrine that we are to engage in “warfare praying” over the principalities and powers over specific regions. These principalities and powers do exist (Dan. 10; Eph. 6:12) but Paul is not teaching “strategic level spiritual warfare” here or anywhere else in Scripture.

The passage is dealing with our personal victory over the devil and demons by fighting against thoughts that they attempt to plant into our minds. The word “imagination” come from the Greek word “logismos.” Thayer’s defines the word as “a reasoning: such as is hostile to the Christian faith.”³ Vine’s says that it is a thought that is “suggestive of evil intent, not of mere reasonings”⁴ It is obvious that these “imagination” are attacks of Satan against our faith in God and His Word.

When we are confronted with an attack of Satan, the first temptation is possibly to become despondent or discouraged. We begin to think that God is not with us and not helping us, and that we are defeated. We must

resist such thoughts. Paul tells us that we must *cast down* these thoughts immediately. We must bring them to the obedience of Christ. It would be difficult to bring thoughts to the obedience of Christ if we have no knowledge of God's Word.

We must be careful not to entertain them. Begin to replace the thoughts to complain and be angry with God with worship, praise and thanksgiving. We do not thank Him for the attack itself, but we thank Him that we know that He has already provided victory through the finished work of Jesus the Messiah.

Satan Cannot Read Your Mind

The Tempter can plant thoughts in your mind, but he cannot read your mind. Therefore, when he plants the thought, it is only his guess as to whether you will cast it down and destroy it with God's Word, or whether you will ponder, meditate, and think about the devilish idea and suggestion. The Tempter has centuries of experience with the art of temptation and has gained a vast amount of knowledge and skill, but he is not all knowing. Only God is all knowing. Paul said, "*No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit*" (1 Cor. 2:11; New Living Testament).

If Satan was omniscient then He would not have moved upon the Jewish leaders to have the Lord crucified, an act that led to his own defeat:

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the

world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:6-8)

As with many other passages, 1 Cor. 2:6-8 is debated among scholars and Bible teachers. Many believe that the passage refers to the Jewish rulers, others to the Roman rulers, and still others to the satanic principalities and powers. I fall into the latter position. One of a number of scholars who also agree with this view is F. F. Bruce:

none of the rulers of this age understood this: this is true of the human authorities responsible for the condemnation of Christ (cf. Ac, 4:23-28; 3:17f), but Paul is thinking rather of the powers in the spiritual realm by which the authorities were impelled on their chosen course.... they **would not have crucified the Lord of glory:** thus ensuring their own doom. Cf. Col. 2:15, where the passion of Christ is portrayed as his victorious struggle against aggressive "principalities and powers"; a hint of this probably appears here and there in the gospels (cf. Luke 22:53, 'the power of darkness'; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, 'the ruler of this world').⁵

Certainly, the Jewish rulers and Roman rulers had a part in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, but they were being controlled by Satan (Eph. 2:2; 1 John 2:19). We must also consider the fact that the Bible never refers to the rulers of Israel or Rome as "princes or rulers of this world." The only persons that have ever been given this title has been Satan and his angels (Eph. 6:12).

As Larry Richards says, "Satan is not as powerful or wise as some fearfully suppose. Satan would hardly have participated actively in his own defeat at Calvary, unless he had supposed that causing Christ's death would defeat rather than accomplish God's purposes."⁶ It's not

that Satan did not know who Jesus was, but Satan is a self-deceived individual who believes that he can defeat God. If he did not then he would not war so hard against Him.

In some sense, the Tempter won a victory in the Garden of Eden and probably thought he could get another one, but God's wisdom is far greater than that of Satan's. Hence, Satan is not all-knowing as God is and God could defeat him by keeping him in ignorance.

Therefore, the only way for Satan to know if his mind suggestions have taken root in us is by our *words* and *actions* (Gen. 6:5-7; Job 20:2; Isa. 65:2; Mat. 12:33-37). The best strategy for the child of God is to keep Satan in ignorance by not allowing him to know that his wicked suggestions have any effect on us. Instead, cast them down immediately when you recognize them.

There are times that we can cast down one of the Tempter's imaginations by simply dismissing the thoughts from our minds as soon as they pop in. I believe that we must loudly declare the Word of God and speak it against the suggestion that has come into our thoughts.

We have control over our mind and our thoughts. We can decide to accept the Tempter's ideas and suggestions, or we can decide to destroy them by engrafting God's Word into our hearts. Our thinking makes us what we are. We can be victorious in this life by constantly lining our thoughts, words, and actions with God's Word, or we can be defeated failures by embracing demonic influences over our minds. The choice we make can make the difference between life and death. *Choose life.*

Chapter Ten

Getting Help From God

Prayer is a *sin-killer*. No one can sin and pray, for prayer will either make us cease from sin, or sin will make us cease from prayer. (F. E. Marsh)¹

Prayer has the power to hold us up in our goings and give us victory over temptation. (R. A. Torrey)²

Be honest with one another about your sins, and pray for each other that you might get the victory over them, for the petition of a truly good man is powerfully effective. (James 5:16; The Cotton Patch Bible by Clarence Jordan)

In our war against the Tempter, we are not left to our own strength and ingenuity to overcome him. We are promised divine assistance from God through prayer. The Scriptures teach us how we may utilize prayer to appropriate God's divine help.

The Commands of God

Prayer is necessary for victory over the Tempter. Prayer involves claiming God's *promises* for divine assistance. However, we should first be familiar with God's *commands*. There are a number of commands that God gives us that would keep us from falling into temptation and sin. We are told to resist the Tempter and He will flee from us (James 4:7), give the Tempter no place (Eph. 4:27), to put off the old man and put on the

new (Eph. 4:22-24), renew our minds (Rom. 12:1-3), cleanse ourselves using God's promises (2 Cor. 7:1), and flee youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22).

These commands are difficult to obey apart from prayer since it is through prayer that we receive God's enablement. God does not command the impossible but our flesh is weak, though our spirits are willing (Matt. 26:41). This is why prayer is vitally important in overcoming sin as demonstrated by the psalmist below:

*BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: **O let me not wander from thy commandments.** Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psalm 119:9-11)*

The above is a prayer of David. He not only did what was practical (Cleansing his ways with God's Word and hiding the Word in His heart), David also put His complete reliance on God by asking Him to keep him from wandering. The Word of God coupled with prayer will enable the child of God to walk in consistent victory over the Tempter's enticements.

The Model Prayer of Jesus

Our warfare can only be won through divine assistance. Jesus taught His disciples to ask God for His help against the Tempter: In Matthew 6:13 we read, "*And do not lead us **into** temptation, But deliver us from the evil one*" (NKJV). We must be careful not to misunderstand this prayer. The prayer is not teaching that God Himself would bring temptation our way unless we ask him not to. Concerning the first part of the verse Adam Clarke says, "This is a mere Hebraism, where God is represented as

doing what He only *permits to be done*” (italics are his).³ We must also be careful not to think that the Lord is teaching us that by praying we will never be tempted to sin. Clarke further wrote:

Taking the word in its *common acceptance*, and that *lead us not* is to be understood, *do not permit us*, to be overthrown by any devices of our adversaries, whether *men* or *devils*; we are to observe, that the prayer is not *do not permit us to be tempted*. This God will not answer to any man, for *temptation* is a part of our *Christian warfare*⁴

In this model prayer, we are not asking the Lord to keep us from ever being tempted, but to keep us from *falling into* temptation. Another commentary says:

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” “Lead us not into temptation.” The prayer is not, Let us not be tempted, suffer us not to endure temptations; but, Let us not *enter into* temptation. There is something very emphatic in those words *enter into*. A man may be exposed to temptation, and by the grace of God come off victorious, and be the stronger for the temptation if he resists it promptly, if he dies trembling to Christ. But if he dallies with it, if he dwells upon its circumstances, if he is not watching and praying, if he undertakes to see how far he may go in it without falling, if he but half rejects it, and half entertains it, then he is entering into temptation, then he is in fearful danger.⁵

Therefore, Jesus is not teaching us to pray in order to prevent temptation but to enlist God’s help in overcoming it. In 1 Cor. 10:13 we read:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be

tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Paul says that temptation is something that is *common* to man. We all go through it. There is no praying to get out of it. However, God is faithful and he keeps His promises to empower us in the midst of temptation and always provides us with an escape, or with deliverance. God will always lead us into victory over temptation.

God never leads us into *defeat* but into *victory*. So we can understand Jesus' instructive prayer as not asking God to not do something He would never do anyway, but to preserve and deliver us when we come under satanic assault. Notice that the passage says that God "*will with the temptation also make a way to escape.*" Here we are given a revelation of God's willingness.

There is no need to question whether or not it is the will of God to help us when we are being assaulted by the Tempter. God's promises are revelations of His will to do certain things on our behalf. 1 Corinthians 10:13 is a wonderful promise to claim in times of temptation, but God's promises must be claimed through prayer.

The Ability of God to Keep Us

While God may not necessarily prevent temptation from coming our way, He is more than willing to make a way of escape for us, and He can keep us from stumbling and falling. Jude says, "*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*" (Jude 1:24). Temptation is inevitable in this life, but it is not necessary to stumble and fall if we will trust His promises.

Commenting on Jude 24, Andrew Murray writes, "A minister once told me that, although God is able, the verse does not say He is willing to do it. God does not

mock us, beloved. If He says He is ‘able’ then it is a proof of His willingness to do it. Do let us believe God’s Word and examine our own experience in light of it.”⁶

God has no need to have His ego stroked by pointless references to His ability. God makes mention of His ability so that we can trust Him to accomplish what He promised to do. God told Asa, “*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong **in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him***” (2 Chron. 16:9). God speaks of His power because He wants to show Himself strong on *our* behalf, but this is appropriated through prayer:

*Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour them that are tempted*** (Heb. 2:17, 18)

The Amplified Bible tells us that the Lord *runs* to the aid of those who call on Him:

*For because He Himself [in His humanity] has suffered in being tempted (tested and tried), **He is able [immediately] to run to the cry of (assist, relieve) those who are being tempted and tested and tried [and who therefore are being exposed to suffering]***. (Heb. 2:18; Amplified Bible)

From this passage we see both God’s willingness and ability to come to our aid when we are under the Tempter’s assaults. Jesus is our High Priest and it is by

His shed blood that we are able to go to the Father and receive the help that we need to overcome temptation.

How does God help us and run to our aid in our times of temptation? He does it by extending His grace to us. Concerning the satanic attacks that the Apostle Paul encountered (2 Cor. 12:7), he wrote, *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Cor. 12:9).

God’s grace provides His strength and power to overcome sin. There are some Christians who like to refer to themselves as “old sinners saved by grace.” The implication here is that God’s grace does nothing more than allow God to save sinners from a fiery hell. While this is true, it is not the whole truth. God’s grace does not only save us from the consequences of our sins, but it also saves us from its power to rule us. Paul wrote, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”* (Rom. 6:14).

If we are under God’s grace then we are not under sin’s authority. The Bible speaks of sin as a personal being that exercises authority over its victim. When used, in this manner we know that it is speaking of Satan, the Tempter (compare Gen. 4:1-7 with 1 John 3:12). When we are under the power of God’s grace, we are no longer sinners. Sinners are those under the dominion of sin. Grace provides strength and power to release us from sin’s authority. This is appropriated through prayer:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find

grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:15, 16)

We are invited to come to the throne of grace *boldly* to receive the help we need to overcome temptation. An invitation of this nature gives us a *right* to go before the throne of our God and receive His help. This invitation to approach the throne of God with boldness is what I like to refer to as *throne room rights*. We have the right to go before God's throne and appropriate grace to assist us in defeating the Tempter.

Submission to God – Resist Sin and Satan

The grace of God enables us to submit ourselves fully to God. When we receive the grace of God pursuant to claiming our throne room rights, we are in a better position to deal with the Tempter's onslaughts:

Or, do you think that the scripture says in an empty manner and to no purpose, The Spirit [Holy Spirit] who has been caused to make His permanent home in us has a passionate desire [to control us] to the point of envy [of any control indwelling sin may have over us]? Moreover, He [the Holy Spirit] gives greater grace. For this reason [in conformity with this] He [the Holy Spirit] says, God sets himself in battle array against the arrogant and haughty but gives grace to the humble and lowly. Be subject with implicit obedience to God at once and once for all. Stand immovable against the onset of the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse [your] hands, O sinners, and

purify [your] hearts, O double-minded
(James 4:5-8; Kenneth Wuest's Expanded
Translation of the New Testament).

We receive God's grace as we *humble* ourselves before Him. This should clear up a misconception that some might have about the invitation to come before God's throne "boldly." *Boldness* does not equate with *arrogance*. Boldness simply means "fearlessness" or "confidence." We should never be afraid to come before our Heavenly Father. We should expect to receive His promised grace to help us in our temptations. However, we never go before Him with arrogance and disrespect.

Therefore we go before God's throne boldly (without fear of reprisal) but we also go *humbly* and submissively. Submission is an important aspect of prayer and one that is seldom taught in our day (despite the numerous volumes of books on the subject of prayer). Some who do mention submission as an aspect of prayer teach it in a *fatalistic manner*. They teach it with the idea that all that happens is God's will and if things have not seemingly changed as a result of our prayer then we are to believe that this is God's will, and we must submit to it. I strongly differ with this idea in light of the Scripture cited above. T. Austin Sparks wrote:

.... prayer is submission, and here we must be aware of the possibility of a contradiction in terms. Prayer is submission. Passive inaction in what is called trust is not prayer. We have heard people speak of trust, which for them means just passivity and inaction, but it is not prayer. Submission is always active, not passive. Submission means getting into line with the divine mind.⁷

Sparks makes a valid point. Submission to God is coupled with actively resisting that which is against His

will. If we accept the idea that every seemingly unanswered prayer is God's will, then it can also be said that when we do not *feel* any strength to resist a satanic temptation then it was God's will for us to yield to sin. This is absurd in light Scripture.

Submission to God and resisting of the Tempter is not based on *feelings*, but *faith* in God's Word. Ignorance of this truth has led many into serious error concerning prayer. God's will concerning answered prayer is not based on a lack of visible results, but on His Word. God's grace strengthens us but this only happens when we decide to submit to Him and align ourselves with His will *in spite of our feelings*. Again Sparks wrote:

Submission is not merely the suppression of desire, but the bringing of desire into line with the divine will, and, if needs be, changing desire.... In prayer, where submission is in view, that is very often what has to be done. That strength of desire has to be arrested in one direction and brought into another direction, perhaps from propelling us forward to bringing us to a standstill in the will of God.⁸

When we submit to God and His will by faith then we will receive the grace-strength from God to "*Stand immovable against the onset of the devil and he will flee from you.*" We have no power in and of ourselves to resist the devil. This is why so many fail.

Many Christians attempt to resist the devil without first making a decision to submit to God. Yet they are continually harassed by the Tempter. Too many have a *devil and demon* focus when they should begin with a *God-focus*. When we look at the passage in James, God is mentioned a number of times while the devil is mentioned only once. This is why submission to God, or having a God focus, gives us the power to defeat the Tempter in our personal warfare against sin.

Failure to Pray Opens the Door for Temptation

If submission and prayer are synonymous, and if prayer is the key to appropriating God's grace to resist the Tempter, then *lack of prayer* will lead to failure. The Apostle Peter makes one of the best Biblical case studies on this subject. The Lord had warned Peter that the Tempter was targeting him for destruction, but the Lord assured him that he prayed for his faith to *fail not*:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me (Luke 22:31-34)

The prophecy that Jesus gave concerning Peter's denial is also recorded in Matthew 26:31-32. Luke is important because he mentions something that Matthew left out, which is the fact that Satan, the Tempter himself, was involved in Peter's denial of his Lord.

Why did the Lord prophesy this to Peter? Was this a part of God's predestined plan for Peter to sin? we have learned already that God does not predestine anyone to sin. However, God knew that Peter's arrogance and over-confidence would give place to the devil in his life (Ephesians 4:27).

After receiving the Lord's warning, Peter should have gotten on his knees and prayed for strength to overcome in the time of trial. Instead he boasted of how this thing would never happen to him. Peter was so cock-

sure of himself (pun intended) that even after Jesus told him that he would deny him three times we read, “*Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*” (Matt. 26:35).

Peter’s confidence was in his own ability to overcome the Tempter and not on God’s grace. I was told about a pastor of a large ministry who commented on the fall of a famous televangelist and his wife. He said in arrogance, “That will never happen to me.” Several years after this incident he was made to resign from his church in shame after it was discovered that he had been having an affair with his secretary. Arrogance will lead to a fall. Faith in God will keep us from falling.

Prayer Can Change the Future

While God can prophesy a future event, not everything He tells us is set in stone. Many times he tells us about negative future events for the express purpose of giving us a chance to pray and change what was told to us. Prayer has the power to change the future and re-route the intentions of the Tempter. Notice the Lord’s words to Peter in the garden of Gethsemane:

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mat. 26:40, 41)

Notice that Jesus is speaking directly to Peter here. Even though Jesus gave Peter the prophecy concerning his yielding to temptation, Peter could have avoided it if he prayed. We see numerous examples of this in Scripture. One example is Hezekiah. Hezekiah was given a prophecy that he would die. There was nothing in

Isaiah's words that would give Hezekiah any hope that things could be different. Yet Hezekiah prayed and through his prayer was able to avert a prophecy of doom (Isa. 38:1-6; Jer. 26:18, 19).

We could also talk about how Jonah prophesied the doom of Nineveh but their fasting and praying changed this. Paul was given a word from God that the ship he was about to travel on would be destroyed and the lives on the ship would be lost. However, his fasting and prayer brought a change and the lives were saved. In Joel 2:13, 14 we see that fasting and prayer can change the very plans of God. This is why Moses could pray, "*Return, LORD! How long...? Change your plans about us, your servants*" (Psalm 90:13; God's Word). Prayer is powerful and can change the future.

Peter was familiar with this truth but his arrogance prevailed. The Lord told Peter that watching and praying would have kept him from entering into temptation. Instead of doing this, Peter fell asleep. This failure to pray led to Peter's fall (Mat. 26:69-75).

Based on the fact that prayer has "changed God's mind" about a prophecy in the past, and the fact that Jesus personally urged Peter to pray so that he would not fall into temptation, Peter's fall was not the result of the prophecy itself but was the result of his failure to pray. Prophecy is not fatalism. Our prophesied destinies can be changed through prayer or lack of it.

No doubt Jesus' prayer for Peter is what led to his restoration (Luke 22:31, 32). Jesus' example concerning Peter teaches us that our prayers for those who may be facing a trial or temptation makes a difference in the outcome. Nevertheless, prayer has the power to bring God's help during times of temptation, and deliver us from the evil one, the Tempter himself.

Chapter Eleven

Overcoming Temptation the Jesus Way

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Though Jesus is very much “God of God” we must face the fact that our Lord became a true human being (John 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:5-11). This means that He was subject to the same things that we are subject to. Many theologians claim that Christ, though incarnated in human flesh, was *impeccable*, or, unable to sin though He was *tempted*. While Jesus never ceased being God, He came to this earth as a full human with all the weaknesses that humans are subject to (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14-18). As Herschel H. Hobbs says, “It is just as great an error to deny his human nature as to deny His divine nature.”¹

The fact that Christ was tempted means that He was able to give in to it. The ability to be tempted precludes the ability to sin (James 1:14). If one is *unable* to sin then neither can they be *tempted* to sin. The fact that Scripture says that Christ was “tempted, yet without sin,” tells us that it was possible for Him to sin.

Thankfully our Lord *never* yielded to temptation. He left us an example for how to resist sin. As we look at our Lord’s wilderness experience, we learn from the master Himself exactly how to face temptation and win.

1. Spend time fasting and Praying

God’s people are often taken by surprise by the Tempter’s attacks. Jesus knew that warfare was inevitable and was prepared through fasting and prayer:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred (Matt. 4:1, 2)

Fasting is not a popular message in the body of Christ, but it is an essential element for successful praying. If our Lord needed to fast in order to be victorious in His war against temptation, His disciples must do so even more. We must also keep in mind that fasting is not suffering silently in hunger. Fasting is always coupled with prayer (Neh. 1:4; Psalm 35:13; Dan. 9:3; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:3) and prayer is necessary for conquering temptation in our lives.

The Bible tells us, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man*” (1 Cor. 10:13). Temptation is inevitable. We will never get away from it. Jesus never got away from it. Even after this wilderness temptation the Bible says, “*Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time*” (Luke 4:13). The Tempter is always seeking an opportunity to destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8, 9). We must stay on the alert through prayer (Mat. 26:41). We need divine assistance when confronting temptation.

When struggling with a sinful habit that is difficult to resist by prayer alone, try adding fasting to it. Fasting seems to give prayer an extra boost of power.

2. Recognize the source of temptation.

It was *the Tempter* that came to Jesus:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And

when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread (Matt. 4:1-3)

We know that God is not the source of temptation (James 1:12-14). Never credit God for the work of His enemy. God wants the best for men. It is the Tempter who seeks to destroy men by enticing them into sin.

The Bible tells us exactly who “the Tempter” is – it is *the devil*. In Matt. 4:1-3, the words “devil” (v. 1) and “tempter” (v. 3) are used interchangeably. Luke also clarifies who the Tempter is: “*Being forty days tempted of the devil*” (Luke 4:2). In Matthew 4:10, Jesus refers to him as “Satan.” These are the different names and titles of the one whose intent is to destroy the lives of men.

Jesus had no trouble recognizing the true source of temptation. It is unfortunate that many of his followers have failed to recognize the difference between the one who tempts and the One who delivers us *from* temptation.

Some believe that Satan appeared to the Lord in some visible form. There is no need to believe that the Tempter appeared to the Lord this way. Our Lord was tempted in all points as we are. More than likely the Tempter came to Jesus as he comes to us by using an invisible form and planting thoughts and suggestions in His mind. However, Jesus recognized the source of the temptation and dealt with him. We must learn to be like our Lord in recognizing the source of temptation, take control of our thought life, and cast down satanic suggestions as our Lord did (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

3. Be Full of the Holy Ghost (Luke 4:1, 2)

Another lesson we learn from Jesus is that we cannot defeat temptation apart from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Notice that Jesus was full of the Holy Ghost BEFORE He went to war against the Tempter:

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil (Luke 4:1, 2a)

Jesus is the Son of God, but He did not go into warfare against the enemy without the supernatural infilling of the Holy Spirit. If *Jesus* needed this, how much more do we: “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18). One should never face temptation without a continuous fresh filling of the Holy Spirit:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and

lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25)

To the Christians in Rome Paul wrote, “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Rom. 8:9). Some argue as to whether the “S” in “Spirit” in these passages should be uppercase (referring to the Holy Spirit) or lower case (referring to the born again human spirit).

The Greek has only one word, which is “*Pneuma*” and this word could be referring to the Holy Spirit or to our human spirits. While I respect those who believe it should be a lower case “S”, I have come to the conclusion that the passages are in reference to the Holy Spirit. In Col. 2:6, we are told: “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk ye in him.***” Furthermore, I believe that Rom. 8:9 settles the issue.

Only by yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit can we successfully confront temptation. However, we must make a *decision* to walk in Him. The Spirit is a “gentleman” and will not force us. We are exhorted to “walk in Him” (yield to His influence) decisively.

4. Be Full of Scripture

Another reason to “walk in the Spirit” is so that He can bring Scripture back to our memory (John 14:26). God’s Word is “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17, 18). The Holy Spirit brings to our memories the right “*rhema*” at the right time to deal with the Tempter’s assaults.

David said, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*” (Ps. 119:11). God’s Word has the power to confront and destroy temptation, but it must first be hidden in our hearts so that the Holy Spirit can bring it out. Notice how Jesus confronted the devil:

*But he answered and said, **It is written**, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Mat. 4:4)*

*Jesus said unto him, **It is written** again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Mat. 4:7)*

*Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for **it is written**, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Mat. 4:10)*

Jesus dealt with what was *already written*. *Scripture* is, “Anything written; a writing; a document; an inscription. A statement regarded as authoritative.” In John 10:35, Jesus affirms that “The Word of God” and “The Scripture” are synonymous. The Bible is indeed “that which is written” which makes it “Scripture” and based on the words of Jesus, this makes it God’s Word.

The devil recognizes this and has more respect for the authority of God’s written Word than many so-called Christians. For example, so called *Liberal* Christianity denies the infallibility of the Bible in order to promote doctrines and teachings that are in opposition to it (denial of virgin birth, denial that Christ is the only way, etc.). Then there are many Christians who claim to believe the Bible, but it is not practiced often nor is it the final authority for all things in their lives. Regardless, the Bible, which is Scripture, affirms itself as God’s Word:

All the Holy Writings are God-given and are made alive by Him. Man is helped when he is taught God's Word. It shows what is wrong. It changes the way of a

man's life. It shows him how to be right with God (2 Tim. 3:16; New Life Bible)

The Contemporary English Version renders the above passage as, “*Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word.*” Jesus did not wait to get any further guidance from His Father or an angel. God will never contradict His written Word. We have been privileged to have a large volume of that *which is written*, and we are expected to meditate on it, memorize it, and speak it out loudly with authority and make a “positive confession of it” when confronted with temptation.

Notice that Jesus did not quote the whole Old Testament. He simply took one passage from Deuteronomy. That one *Rhema* was sufficient to thwart the devil at every turn. God’s Word is a sword that wields both power and authority in all realms.

Deal with any Scripture quoted incorrectly that appears to justify committing sin rather than enabling you to overcome it. Satan attempted to get Jesus to sin by misusing Scripture (Mat. 4:6; Satan misquoted Ps. 91). Make sure that any *interpretation* of Scripture does not contradict the plain teaching of other parts of the Bible. No portion of God’s Word endorses sin.

5. Deal with the lust of the flesh

1 John 2:16 tells us that some temptations come as a result of living in this world (where Satan is ruler) such as “the lust of the flesh.” The first temptation that the devil brought to Jesus was the fulfillment of a natural need in a way inconsistent with the spirit of God’s Word.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command

that these stones be made bread (Matthew 4:2-3)

Many of our temptations are an attempt to fulfill natural needs and desires in ways unauthorized by Scripture. There was nothing *specific* in the Old Testament against Jesus turning stones to bread, but Jesus demonstrated by His response that God's Word teaches against placing our *self-interest* ahead of *God-interest*.

For Jesus to use His authority as the Son of God to command stones to be made bread would have demonstrated a lack of dependence upon His Father. Jesus did no miracle except those he was led by His Father to do (John 5:17-20; 14:8-12). God has given His people authority also, but we must be led by God in how we exercise it, even where the need appears to be legitimate.

The need presented before Jesus was legitimate (hunger). The means to fulfill the need was not. Men and women have legitimate needs – Food, clothing, intimacy, sexual, etc. God created us with these needs. He has also created legitimate ways to have these needs fulfilled. However, we should not make our needs a priority over His authority. If we submit to His will first as Jesus did in resisting Satan's temptation, then God will ensure that all of our needs are met (Mat. 6:25-34.)

This can only be accomplished as we learn to take control of the lusts of our flesh by the power of God (Gal. 5:16; 1 John 2:16). Whenever there is a need or intense desire in our lives, our flesh screams with its demands to have the need fulfilled. It will even illegitimately use what are otherwise Biblical principles, albeit attempting to make them into something magical just to meet the flesh's lust as the Tempter wanted Jesus to do.

Sometimes, those of us in the Charismatic movement who have learned our position in Christ and our delegated authority can attempt to abuse it by

demanding that God do certain things. Pray and seek God's guidance before exercising authority. Jesus once rebuked a storm (Mark 4:39), but Paul prayed and endured a storm. Yet, Paul's praying and fasting moved God to save lives that would have been lost otherwise (Acts 27:21-25). Overcoming the storm was a legitimate need, but one must be led by God in how to do it.

6. Deal with the lust of the eyes

Another principle that 1 John 2:16 says is found in the world is the "lust of the eyes." This is seen in another of the Tempter's attacks against the Lord:

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Mat. 4:8, 9)

Notice that the devil *SHOWED* (Matt. 4:8.) His intention is to tantalize through the *eyes*. Many of our problems with sin come from *looking* at things. We should be careful about what we dwell upon. Satan uses the "eye gate" to tempt the unsuspecting.

We covered this aspect of the Tempter's tactic in an earlier chapter. We saw that the Bible gives examples of people who have fallen prey to the Tempter's "look of lust" tactic such as Eve (Gen. 3:6), Lot (Gen. 13:10-13), and David (2 Sam. 11:2; See also Proverbs 6:25).

Jesus would later tell us that adultery starts with "looking", but He also gives us instruction on what to do about it (Mat. 5:28, 29). The key to victory is to "make a covenant with our eyes" (Job 31:1). This is a concrete decision that we will not allow ourselves to "leer and lust" at obstacles the devil places in our path to trip us.

7. Do not compromise with the world

Matthew again says, *“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the **kingdoms of the world**, and the glory of them”* (Matthew 4:8). The Tempter offered Jesus the world. However, what does it profit a man if he should gain the whole world but lose his soul (Mat. 16:26).

Friendship with the world is enmity with God and is in direct association with Satan, who is the “prince” and “god” of this world (James 4:4-7; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 5:18, 19). If the Lord had accepted the Tempter’s offer then He would have placed Himself under Satan’s authority. Imagine the living God falling under the authority of His own creatures. Furthermore, this would have condemned the Lord, since He would have lost His soul. If He would have lost His soul then all possibilities for our redemption would have been lost as well. There was more at risk than our Lord’s own personal pleasure. Our yielding to temptation places more at risk than ourselves. It can affect family, friends, and others in unimaginable ways.

Be careful about where your affections lie. Do not love the world nor the things that are in it (Col. 3:2; 1 John 2:15). While we are not to be ascetics, we must be sure that our desire for the Kingdom of God becomes important to us rather than what the devil has to offer.

Because Jesus did not compromise with the world, Satan had nothing in Him (John 14:30). If we resist this temptation then Satan will have nothing to accuse us either. Jesus conquered the world and the Tempter by resisting his offer. By faith we can share in His victory over the world (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4, 5).

8. Deal with any pride issues (Mat. 4:5, 6).

The devil attempted to have Jesus destroy Himself through pride. In Matthew 4:5, 6 we read:

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone (Matthew 4:5, 6)

Perhaps if Jesus jumped and the angels carried Him without any hurt, then everyone would see it, be amazed and would see Jesus as the Messiah. But this was not the rightful use of God's promise from Psalm 91.

Christians sometimes "tempt God" by claiming promises inappropriately. This has been especially prevalent within our Faith movement. Unsound applications of Biblical truth have led to the destruction of some Christians, and their children. It has often hurt the message of faith. This is usually done from "pride." Some want to prove "how much faith they have" or "how spiritual they are." This is not done for *God's* glory but for their own.

If ever there was a sin that God hates, it is pride. It is the first among what has become known as "the seven deadly sins" (Prov. 6:16-19.) Satan himself fell due to pride (Ezek. 28:17; Isa. 14:12-15.) Satan knows from personal experience that pride brings about our destruction (Prov. 16:18). This is why we do not put new converts in ministry. Position and power without maturity place people under the same judgment as the devil. It puts them on his territory where he is given access to them:

An elder must not be a new Christian, because he might be proud of being chosen so soon, and the Devil will use that pride

to make him fall (1 Tim. 3:6; New Living Translation)

He must not be a new believer, lest the position go to his head and the Devil trip him up (The Message)

The way to victory and authority over Satan is to humble ourselves before God. When we do this then we can successfully resist Satan because he will not have any rights to us (James 4:6-10; 1 Pet. 5:5-9). We are not told in Scripture to pray and ask God to humble us. We are told to “humble ourselves.” This is an act of our will.

Notice that “humility” and submission to God are synonymous. When many in the Charismatic movement discovered that we have the ability to “resist the devil” we became very excited and began looking for demons under every rock and tree. We missed our Lord’s admonition not to rejoice over our authority over the devil and we became prideful about the fact that we can boss demons around (Luke 10:17-20). Authority cannot be exercised until we learn to be submissive to God and place ourselves under *His* authority (Matt. 8:1-10). The authority to resist satanic temptations and attacks comes from complete reliance on God.

Conclusion

The Lord provides the best example for winning against the assaults of the Tempter. We must emulate our Lord if we are to walk in constant victory as He did. Even more, His own death, burial, and resurrection provided us with the power that we need to do it because through His redemptive work, we are identified with Him. Let us take our Lord’s example and apply them to our lives.

Chapter Twelve

Overcoming the Primary Attacks of the Tempter (Part 1)

For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain (1 Thess. 3:3:5).

In this book, we have examined the Scriptures concerning temptation and its primary source. We have considered our role, God's role, and the devil's role in temptation. Our everyday lives involve the temptations that are common to man (1 Cor. 10:13). We know that Satan, the Tempter, is the ultimate force behind them. We have learned a number of Biblical principles that would enable us to defeat the Tempter. In these next two studies, we will learn how to apply these truths practically in our everyday lives.

There are a number of areas in which God's people struggle. We will look at some of them and see how we may attack and defeat Satan and his minions in these particular areas.

Knowing Exactly What Sin Is

Before we look at those areas of our lives in which we should take on the Tempter it may be helpful for us to understand exactly what sin is. If we do not believe that certain behaviors are sinful, then Satan will keep us in bondage in that area. It is only by knowing the truth that we can experience freedom (John 8:31-34). The Bible gives numerous descriptions of sin. One definition that covers several categories of sin is "the works of the flesh:"

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21)

Here we find many things that Satan tempts us with. How does the Tempter entice us with the things mentioned above?

The Craftiness of the Tempter

One of the ways that the Tempter is able to entice us is by using good reasons and justifications for sinning. If we are to have victory over the Tempter, we must learn to refute his crafty reasons and excuses for engaging in sin:

*for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful to God for bringing down of strongholds, **reasonings bringing down**, and every high thing lifted up against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of the Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Young's Literal Translation)*

We must learn to use God's Word to bring down the *reasonings* or *justifications* that Satan plants in our minds to move us to sin. Many of us may know that sin is wrong. However if we do not know that a particular type of behavior is sin then the devil can convince us that it is

a good thing. If we know that a certain behavior is a sin but the devil provides us with a good justification for committing it, we usually will fall prey to it if we do not know how to resist it. The tempter is very crafty and knows how to ease our conscience, or help us put our conscience aside by giving us justifiable reasons for sinning. That is why God provides us with His Word to help us cast down those reasons.

Drunkenness and Substance Abuse

Galatians 5:19-21 tells us that “drunkenness” is one of the “works of the flesh.” Most of us know that drunkenness, getting high from drugs, and other forms of substance abuse is sin. However, with the right “reason” we can ease our conscience, get drunk and high, and may even deceive ourselves into believing that God understands.

One of the excuses that the Tempter uses to tempt people to drink, do drugs and other substance abuse is *their need to numb pain*. Often when we are going through a trial or a negative circumstance, we are vulnerable to temptation. We want something to dull the pain. While there are numerous sins we could commit in our efforts to escape painful circumstances, the tendency towards drugs, alcohol or some other narcotics seem to top the list. Alcohol and narcotics are used primarily for this purpose:

Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more
(Proverbs 31:6, 7)

How do we deal with this temptation to numb our pain? First remember that while these things may bring a

temporary sense of relief, this very same proverb tells us that strong drink destroys kings (verses 3-5).

We must also remember that Scripture forbids drunkenness: “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18). Whatever “fills” us is the thing that will control us. If we are full of alcohol, that will control us. If we are full of God’s Spirit then He will control us.

Whether we are tempted to kill our pain through drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling or some other form of addiction, we must submit ourselves to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from us with this lie (James 4:7). After the temporary pleasurable effects of the sin are gone, the problems still exist. It is better to cast our cares upon the One who cares for us (Psalm 55:12; 1 Pet. 5:7) than to fall for the lie that we should temporarily escape the pain through something destructive.

God Made It So Why Can’t We Use It?

Another excuse the Tempter uses concerning alcohol and other abused substances is the idea that God made these things, and they were made to be used. People who like to smoke marijuana, cigarettes, etc. are often deceived by the Tempter to justify their substance abuse.

The tempted one will spout out this absurdity when they are being warned about the *effects* of these things. It is true that God created the marijuana plants and the tobacco plants as well as many other things. However, He did not make them for the improper uses that we find among people today.

God made the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, just as he made the other trees. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve were strictly forbidden to eat from that tree (Gen. 2:16, 17). God made this tree for a purpose and the improper use of the tree has plunged mankind into the evil and corruption that it is in today.

Furthermore, the original things God made (the plants that are later turned into the marijuana drug, the tobacco plants that are later laced with all types of poisons to form the cigarettes, the grapes that are later mixed with chemicals and made to be alcoholic, etc.) are taken by man and turned into something that God did *not* create and does not endorse. Therefore, to accept the Tempter's excuse to continue to abuse substances because God made its original elements will plunge us into further slavery with him and certain death.

But Jesus did it so Why Can't I?

Regardless of the above, the Tempter will tell you that Jesus drank and that Paul recommended drinking alcohol to one of his disciples. Reference is often made to Jesus' making wine (John 2:1-11) as well as Paul's exhortation to Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach problems (1 Tim. 5:23). These and a few others are the best known proof texts by alcoholics. They use these to justify drinking and drunkenness.

Many Bible teachers go to an opposite extreme in order to counter the alcoholic's use of "drinking" Scriptures by making claims that the Bible forbids drinking or that the wine described in Scriptures was nothing more than "grape juice." We cannot successfully defeat error with error. To do so will only give more power to the Tempter to propagate sin.

While Paul did state that it is good to not drink wine if it will cause a brother to stumble (Rom. 14:21), the truth is that wine was not forbidden in Scripture. Nevertheless, the Spirit inspired writers spoke strongly against *addiction* and *excess* (1 Tim. 3:1-3, 8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; 1 Pet. 4:3.) They also spoke harshly against drunkenness (Luke 21:34; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18).

So here are the questions to those who would allow the Tempter to use Jesus and Paul as justifications for their drinking: Did Jesus ever encourage drunkenness? Are there any passages that show Jesus drunk? Did Paul ever encourage Timothy to drink until he passed out? On the contrary, Jesus was never drunk and discouraged drunkenness (Luke 21:34) and Paul told Timothy to take a little *wine*. Furthermore, neither of them ever encourage anyone to spend time in bars, nightclubs, strip clubs and other questionably moral places that serve alcohol.

If taking a little wine will lead one to want to drink a lot more wine, thus making the person a drunkard (1 Cor. 5:11), then they should not drink any wine at all. One who cannot exercise self control is not being like Jesus and therefore, one cannot use His turning water into wine or any alleged drinking on His part as justification for one's sinful indulgence. The Bible forbids drunkenness so do not give in to the lie of the Tempter.

Sex Outside of Marriage

Galatians 5:19-21 also says that *Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness* are the works of the flesh. Sexual temptation is a major weapon used by the Tempter to destroy people. While most of us recognize this, we still hear numerous scandals about well known Christians and not so well known Christians who have destroyed their lives, ministries, families, etc. through this. The remorse that they show after being exposed proves that they knew it was wrong before they engaged in it and while they were engaged in it. So why did they yield to the temptation? The Tempter was able to present justifiable reasons for doing so.

Common Law Marriage

Let's look at a couple of these excuses. The Tempter will tell you that you can have sex with your

“significant other” because, technically speaking, you are married to that person. He will tell you that no one needs a ceremony and a marriage license to be married.

This is used by those who advocate what is known as “common law” marriage. While the Bible does not teach that one must have a large ceremony nor does it teach that one must have a “marriage license” from the state, we can point out two things that demonstrate the satanic origins of the “common law” marriage idea.

Most people, including many outside of the church, would be very skeptical about those who were “shacking up” but claimed to be committed Christians. Such a lifestyle brings no glory to God. Furthermore, I have seen these “common-law” marriages break up very easily. This usually leaves the woman without any means of support and no legal means by which to get it. Women (or men) do not have the protection that a marriage recognized by the state would provide.

The second thing about those who buy into the Tempter’s lie concerning this “common law” idea is that he blinds them to the fact that marriage, Biblically speaking, is a *covenant relationship* (Malachi 2:14-16; Jer. 31:31, 32). A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more people that cannot be broken except by death (Rom. 7:2, 3; 1 Cor. 7:27). This is why God says that He *hates* divorce.

However, even in Scripture when a person went through a divorce, there was a procedure. The procedure was to write a bill of divorcement (Deut. 24:1-3; Mat. 19:7-9.) This is impossible to do if there was never anything making the marriage concrete in the first place. A covenant will usually have some paper or something that states the terms of the covenant, and there is usually an exchange of “oaths” or “vows.” In common law marriage, people simply move in together and sleep together.

In the light of the Bible's teaching on covenant relationships and the fact that the Biblical marriage is a covenant, something not necessarily recognized in a "common-law" marriage, we can say that this is nothing more than a lie of the Tempter to seduce people into sexual sin.

But We Love Each Other

Another reason that the Tempter propagates is the idea that the sexually immoral are justified because they *love* each other. This lie is used to justify the belief that any type of sexual sin can be overlooked based on the *emotional feelings* that the sinners have for one another. The Tempter is successful in using this lie because many do not understand what love truly is nor do they understand the priority of love. In our English language, we use the word love to describe a number of things such as a material possession we like more than another, a favorite movie or song, close relatives, friend, or strong sexual desires that we may have for another person. Often the word "love" is employed to describe the above.

True Biblical love is not based only on mere emotion but on self-sacrifice. It is this type of love that Scripture expects us to practice (Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13:1-13) because this love keeps us from sinning (1 John 3:16-18, 23; 4:7-21). The priority of this love is God first, our neighbors, and then ourselves:

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live (Luke 10:27, 28).

Those who desire to live in sin because “we love each other” have reversed the priority and are not practicing a self sacrificing love. They love themselves first because they have allowed emotional feelings for another person to allow them to despise God's Word and live in rebellion against Him. Their order is “myself first,” then (some) others, and then a claim to love God, who they refuse to obey. The Tempter has fed these people a substitute for Biblical love - a selfish, emotion, temporary love. Love God first. By doing this one will not enter “love” relationships that go contrary to the Word of God.

The Tempter’s Other Excuses for Sexual Immorality

Some of the other Justifiable reasons the devil will plant in our minds for sexual sin is the idea that *you can have all the sex you want because you are young and have plenty of time to get right with God later*. Anyone who reads a newspaper or watches a news program should recognize that death does not discriminate against age. Young people are dying every day.

Just recently I was given some sad news that illustrates this point. A young lady that one of my closest friends had ministered to many times about her life, her morality and her need to be serious about Christ was recently killed. This young lady was attempting to buy drugs. The drug dealers took her money but would not give her the drugs. She stood in front of their car demanding either the drugs or the money back. They chose instead to hit her with the car which resulted in her death.

James 4:14 and Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 gives us a sober warning about the fact that we have no idea what tomorrow may bring. Those who would choose to live in sin have no guarantee that they will live long enough to repent from it at a later date. It would do well for our young people to follow David’s advice: “*Wherewithal*

shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9). Use your youth for Christ, not for the devil.

Another one of the Tempter's crafty reasons for sexual sin, especially towards women is, "*but if I don't do this with him, he'll leave me.*" Many single women are concerned that if they do not provide a man sex before marriage then he will leave her and find someone else. The Tempter uses the fear of loneliness and aging alone to entice young women (and men) to go against the very teaching of God's Word.

This demonstrates a lack of trust in God to send the right spouse along at the right time. When we are in fear of the devil's lie ("He'll leave you," "You better hang on to him any way you can," or "you will die a lonely woman") then we lack faith. Lack of faith drives us to sin and do that which we know is completely wrong. You must resist the Tempter in this area by reminding yourself that God will give you a godly husband (or wife) who will not demand that you violate your conscience and go against your convictions simply to satisfy him (or her).

One more of the many excuses that the Tempter uses to justify sexual sin is the fact that some of us were sexually abused as children. We believe that our past victimization gives us the right to sin. It is always sad and traumatic for anyone to be abused as a child (Eph. 6:4). The failure of parents to obey God's command (Eph. 6:4) can easily lead to child abuse or child neglect. While we sympathize with those who have suffered, we also must warn them that self pity is not justification to sin. Prolonged self pity often leads people to sin. It is difficult to forgive our abusers, but we must do it and put the past behind us. God wants us to "*forget the shame of thy youth*" (Isa. 54:4; Isa. 43:18, 19). We have to learn to counter the Tempter with God's Word in this area. Declare the shame of your youth to be placed behind you.

Overcoming Satan's Sexual Temptations

The sex drive and the need for companionship are things God gave to humans (though some have been gifted not to have one as Paul was). It was the Lord, who said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone*" (Gen. 2:18). No doubt this applies to most women as well. However, the Tempter has deceived many of God's people into believing that they can just "shack up" or meet this legitimate need in ways other than God's prescribed way. He will lead people into believing that just because the need is one given by God that God will allow them to meet it in any way they please.

If you have an overwhelming need for sex then the solution is to marry another godly person. Paul says, "*But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn*" (1 Cor. 7:9). Anyone who has lived in this western society and has watched at least ten minutes of television knows that we have a culture saturated in sex. The Tempter uses sex, an otherwise God given and legitimate need, masterfully in destroying those who would be mastered by it. Therefore, God has provided marriage as a way to meet this need:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

Scripture shows that the Tempter, Satan, is behind the sexual problems that we often encounter in our society. Having a godly spouse is one of God's primary ways to meet the need for sex. So it is true that God has given us certain needs, but He has also given us His prescribed way and provision for meeting those needs.

Conclusion to Part One

While sin itself goes beyond sexual sin and substance abuse, the two sins dealt with in this chapter are most prevalent in our western culture. Therefore, they are the most fitting examples to show how the Tempter does not always use outright enticement to sin, but will provide excuses that could play on our consciences, ignore the "sinfulness" of the sin, and engage in it to our detriment.

In the next chapter, we will look at some of the other crafty ideas that the Tempter uses to entice people to sin. You will probably recognize them. However, we will show you how to overcome them.

Chapter Thirteen

Overcoming the Primary Attacks of the Tempter (Part 2)

So let us shrug off everything that comes against us and refuse every temptation to sin, with which the devil wants to entangle us. Let us persevere in running the race in which God has entered us, with our eyes fixed on Jesus who is always ahead of us (Heb. 12:1; The Truth New Testament by Apostle Colin Urquhart)

In the last chapter we examined two particular areas of temptation which were drunkenness (along with substance abuse), and sexual immorality to get an overall picture of how the Tempter uses the process of reasoning to trap people into committing these sins. In this chapter we will look at the Tempter's arsenal of general reasons for sinning and learn how to overcome them.

God Will Forgive You

One way the Tempter is able to help us soothe our consciences and entice us to sin is by telling us "God will forgive you anyway so just sin and then ask for forgiveness." While God's mercies are indeed "new every morning" (Lam. 3:22, 23) and His mercy is everlasting (Psalm 110:5; 103:17), it is truly an ungrateful person who would engage in sin only because he or she knows that God will forgive them. Such an individual has no true love for God.

Furthermore, anyone who would sin habitually with no remorse because they know that they will be

forgiven should actually question whether or not they are truly born again by the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:7-10).

Therefore, a person who believes the Tempter's lie that they can continue in sin and take advantage of the grace of God may want to give more thought to this idea. To yield to this lie is to place ourselves in bondage to the Tempter himself. Paul asks, "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? **God forbid.** How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*" (Rom. 6:1, 2).

The true Christian may *struggle* with sin (1 John 1:7-2:2) but he or she is not one that *deliberately* sins just because he or she knows that God is abundant in grace and mercy. If a "Christian" sins willfully and deliberately on this basis then they are not a Christian but a child of the devil. Furthermore, the Tempter neglects to remind us that sin comes with some horrifying consequences (Gal. 6:7, 8; Heb. 13:4) and forgiveness does not always alleviate them. Do not buy into this lie of the Tempter lest you should suffer much pain later in life.

You Need a Break

Another one of Satan's justifiable reasons to sin is something like this, "I have been living right and doing good for so long. I deserve an occasional indulgence in to sin." No doubt that David probably felt this same way during the time that he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband. Up to that time David was a defender of the weak and was an upholder of righteousness. David had flaws like the rest of us but the majority of his life we see a man conscious of his God and one who always attempted to live in God's righteous standards. But having lived righteously for so long he perhaps felt that he was entitled to an indulgence. He later discovered how deadly wrong he was. For the rest of his life this otherwise great king suffered the horrendous consequences of his actions.

The Tempter deceives people into thinking that they are entitled to at least one “get out of jail free card” since they have been living holy for so long. Yet all it took was one sin for Adam and Eve to bring death upon the whole world. One sin after years of righteous living could cost us more than we think. One night with a prostitute after years of faithfulness to our spouse can give us a deadly disease. One dishonest transaction after years of faithfulness on the job could land us in the unemployment line.

The prophet Ezekiel taught that a righteous man can lose all the memory of the good that he has done by an act of sin:

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die (Eze. 18:24).

One sin can cause all of our righteousness to be forgotten. Seems unfair doesn't it? You wouldn't be the first to think that. Some in Ezekiel's time also complained that God was being unfair. God responds with the following:

Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for

his iniquity that he hath done shall he die
(Eze. 18:25, 26).

Regardless of whether we believe that this is unfair or not, we should not submit to the lie of the Tempter to indulge ourselves as a reward for past righteousness.

We're Supposed to Sin

Another excuse that the Tempter plants in our minds is, "We all sin anyway. We're supposed to because the Bible says that if we claim that we haven't sinned then we are liars." This is based on an erroneous understanding of 1 John 1:8 and 10:

If we say that we have no sin¹, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10)

The Tempter is not beyond using the Bible in order to entice us into sin. If he did it to Jesus then he will do it to us. If we read the verses surrounding these two verses, we may get a different picture. The intention is found within the context of the whole epistle. If we keep 1 John 1:8-10 in context with the following verses in chapter 2, we will see that 1 John 1:8 and 10 is far from promoting a license to sin:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his

word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 1:8-2:4).

In 1 John 2:1, right after we are told that we should not claim that we have not sinned, we are told that John, far from the purpose of excusing a life of sinful practice, wrote for the purpose that we do *not* sin. However, *IF* we sin and will confess, Jesus is our advocate and has already made a propitiation for our sins by His blood. But the key word is *IF* and not *WHEN* we sin. Keeping 1 John 1:8 in context with chapter 2 teaches us that this is about PROVISION and not PERMISSION. The context also shows us that 1 John 1:8 is about how to appropriate the provision. It is not a dissertation teaching us that we cannot help but sin. This is vitally important because the two conjunctions (if vs. when) tell us the difference between God's *permission* and His *provision*. He does NOT permit us to sin but makes a provision *if* we do. Therefore John is not teaching in 1 John 1:8 that we MUST sin and that such is a part of life on earth.

Continuing to read we also see that those who make a practice of sin (not obeying God's commandments) cannot claim to know Him. Therefore, 1 John 1:8 is not a license to sin everyday and then make pious excuses for such practices. We defeat the Tempter's lie by keeping God's Word within its contextual setting

and refrain from cherry picking passages that give us a license to stumble without remorse.

Go Ahead and Sin; Whose Gonna Know?

The Tempter leads people to believe that they can sin and keep it from ever being exposed to others. In other words they believe that they can get away with it. Just continue to go to church, act holy, and no one will ever know that you are caught up in some form of iniquity. There are some who even seem to believe that they can hide their sin from God Himself.

I am amazed that the Tempter is able to successfully deceive people into thinking that *they* can deceive an omniscient and omnipresent God (see Ps. 90:8). Sin does have a tendency to make us illogical. After all, if we were wise, we would not so easily fall into the entrapment of sin. Nonetheless, Moses enunciated a principle in the Old Testament that we should take heed to:

*But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and **be sure your sin will find you out*** (Num. 32:23)

While Moses was primarily speaking to a group of people who were plotting evil, the statement was recorded by the inspiration of God for our profit (2 Tim. 3:16). We do not get away with anything because regardless of whether or not any human being discovers it, God will know. God may have mercy for a time by not exposing us to the rest of the world – He seeks our repentance and has no desire to humiliate us – there comes a time when He will expose us if we do not turn from our wrong:

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to

light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. (1 Cor. 4:5)

We must come to the realization that sooner or later our actions and motives will be exposed. Our Lord, in His abundant mercy, always gives us “space to repent” (Rev. 2:21). He is not waiting in Heaven to destroy us or embarrass us but to lead us to repentance. However, the Tempter will deceive us into believing that God’s patience in waiting for us is due to either God not knowing what we are doing or He has decided to let us get away with what we are doing. Either way, if we do not repent, run to Him for mercy, and seek His power to overcome, then someone is gonna’ know. Several prominent internationally known ministers have discovered this the hard way in the past several years.

You Can’t Help Yourself

One of the Tempter’s many tactics is to blame others for our actions. We could not help losing our temper with our annoying spouse. We could not help undressing that person of the opposite sex because of how they looked at us and what they were wearing. Both Adam and Eve learned how to play the “blame game” from the beginning of their fall (Gen. 3:11-13).

The Tempter will even lead us to blame *him* if that will keep us in bondage to sin. The late comedian, Flip Wilson coined a popular phrase, “the devil made me do it.” While his statement was made in jest many Christians have actually used the idea from this phrase in some form or another. You see, under this idea Satan will tell you that you are “demon possessed” and cannot control your actions.

Satan has even raised up numerous theologies over the centuries to help us with this idea that we just cannot help ourselves. One of these theological ideas is the teaching of “total depravity.” This teaches that men (primarily those who are not saved) are totally depraved and cannot do anything but wrong. While this teaching is taught in a number of Evangelical churches, both Scripture and experience proves this idea to be false.

There is a certain amount of truth that non-Christians are in bondage to sin (Rom. 7:16, 17; Eph. 2:1-5), but this is far from true for the Christian. Paul wrote, “*Know ye not, that to whom ye **yield yourselves** servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*” (Romans 6:16). Yielding is a voluntary action. We can yield ourselves to sin but sin cannot make us do anything. Sin need not have dominion over us but it can be mastered. By walking with our Lord in the light of His Word rather than submitting to the enemy’s lies, victory is assured. We can indeed “help ourselves.”

You Already Sinned So Keep Doing It

The Tempter will not only lead us to sin but entices us to continue in it with the excuse, “You already did it once and God is already angry with you so you may as well keep doing it.” We may feel that since we have already slipped into a certain sin then we may as well stay in it. Instead of running to God with repentance and receiving His forgiveness, we repeat or continue in the sin. If we did it once it becomes easier to do it again.

However, to continue in this manner demonstrates unbelief in the promise of God to truly forgive us when we confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:9). The Tempter works diligently to blind us to the truth of God’s Word in order to keep us in sin. He knows that as long as we are in

unbelief concerning God's willingness to extend mercy then he can keep us in bondage.

We cannot have mercy apart from confessing and turning away from our sins (Prov. 28:13). God longs for us to return to Him. He does not want us in the grip of the Tempter but free to serve Him. This is why He is so willing to extend mercy. Do not allow the Tempter to deceive you into continuing in a specific sin just because you already did it once.

Unfortunately for some, the sin becomes so pleasurable to them that they are unwilling to turn back to God even with the knowledge that He will forgive and cleanse. They believe that because they have not suffered any immediate consequences from their sin that this is a license to continue in it. If we did something and there was no immediate negative result from it – the wrath of God did not come with thunder, lightning and judgment – then we are prone to believe that we can get away with doing it again.

We should take careful heed to the fact that sin is like a seed which when sown can sooner or later bring forth a harvest (Gal. 6:6-8). No seed produces an immediate crop, but if continually cultivated, it will sooner or later produce something. Don't believe the lie of the Tempter that one should continue in a sin. Confess it, turn away from it, and begin anew your relationship with Christ.

God Could Stop You if he Wanted To

One final excuse we will look at is the Tempter's subtle attempt to blame God. He will say, "If God doesn't want you to do it then He can stop you. After all, He already knows what you're going to do anyway."

The Tempter so often feeds us "half truths." Yes, it may be true that God knew what you would do in a certain situation, but Satan neglects to tell you that God

has a covenant of free will and in most cases does not intervene apart from our asking. For example, Peter swore that he was ready to die with Jesus even if the rest of the disciples denied Him. Yet, “*Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice*” (Mat. 26:34).

Jesus knew exactly what Peter was going to do. God is omniscient and can know any portion of the future He desires to know with total accuracy. However, God also knows that the future He knows can be changed through the praying of His people:

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mat. 26:40, 41)

Prayer can change future events because the God of the future answers prayer. The person who truly wants God to “stop him or her” will follow Scripture’s teaching to go boldly to the throne of grace and get the help from temptation that is promised there (Heb. 4:15-16). Sadly, when we have been hypnotized by Satan’s enticement then we will not want God to really intervene but will instead use His lack of intervention as our excuse to yield to the temptation.

God will not force His way and His will upon us (Matt. 23:37; Luke 7:30; Rev. 3:20; etc.) but will invite us to come to Him for help. If we want God to keep us from temptation then we must submit ourselves to Him and the Tempter will flee (James 4:7).

Chapter Fourteen

It Isn't Working

As with all Biblical truth, things can be filtered through the minds of different people and interpreted according to culture and theological bias. Sometimes when we believe that we are applying Biblical principles, we are actually engaging in erroneous practices that God is unable to honor.

When things of this nature occur, people complain that “it isn't working. I keep falling into temptation.” God's Word will always work if we work it correctly. We can always experience victory over temptation and sin because we are dealing with a foe who was conquered by Jesus through His death burial and resurrection. To say that victory over the Tempter cannot work for one of us is to say that Jesus' victory is insufficient in our lives.

The principles taught in this book are based on God's Word and find their foundation in the finished work of Christ. To say that what is taught here is not working is to remove from ourselves the responsibility for our failure. When we learn to stop blaming others for our failure then we will find help. In this chapter let us look at a few mistaken ideas that could possibly hinder victory over the Tempter.

Mistaken Ideas Concerning the Will of Man

This is pretty much the foundation for all of the mistaken ideas that we will look at. Some have the erroneous idea, often stemming from a distorted perspective of God's omnipotence and sovereignty, that God can simply override the will of man anytime He so desires. We think that by utilizing prayer, Scripture, the Holy Spirit's power in us, etc. means that my will can be overridden, and I will not do what I otherwise might do.

Man was created in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-28). Since God's will is free then man's will is free. When God created man in His image and likeness, He could not, morally speaking, control the will of man. From an aspect of power, God can do anything. However, His morality dictates what He does with His power (Psalm 89:33-35). If this were not true, then there would have been no need for God to issue the first man commandments (Gen. 2:15-17). God would have simply overrode Adam's will to ensure that His will was fulfilled.

Solomon wrote, "*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions*" (Eccl. 7:29). Though man was created "upright" or "righteous" (without sin), man was able to do the *opposite* of righteousness. This is the power of man's will. Man can turn away from the way that God programmed him to be.

As we go through Scripture, we find that God pleads with His people not to sin, but they do so anyway (Psalm 81:10-12; Prov. 1:24; Zech. 7:9-13; Isa. 65:2, 12; 66:3, 4; Jer. 7:25, 26; 11:7, 8; 26:4, 5; Eze. 18:32; 33:11; Mat. 23:37; John 5:40; Rom. 10:21). If God could make His people obedient would He need to go through such heartache? Rather than manipulate our will, God desires to reason with us:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (Isa. 1:18-20).

God wants to reason with us and cleanse us from sin. He even gives us promises of reward for our *willing* obedience and warnings of punishment if we rebel. However, our will is free to obey or rebel. Therefore, it is important to understand the will of man as it pertains to our warfare with the Tempter. Failure to do so will lead to disappointment if we are waiting for God to override our will and stop us from sinning. We must actively submit to Him and resist the Tempter (James 4:7).

Mistaken Ideas Concerning the Eradication of Desire

Some believe that the desire to sin can be eradicated or obliterated to the point where we will never be tempted again. Some mistakenly teach that sin is so eradicated in the born again Christian that there will no longer be any temptation or struggle. Christians who embrace this teaching are often disappointed as they stand on God's Word, pray, and rely on the Holy Spirit only to find out that many of the *feelings* of lust that they struggle with have not disappeared.

From this mistaken idea, we assume that prayer and the Word of God failed to help us. However, the Bible never promises that we would be free from temptation to sin in this life. On the contrary, we are told that we will have it. The fact that we will be tempted means that the desires are still there (James 1:13-14). We must also keep in mind that Satan and his minions are behind most of the temptations we face (1 Thess. 3:4, 5; Matt. 4:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:3). The Tempter will always tempt by arousing desire. Scripture teaches us to go to war against these desires:

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11)

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:16, 17).

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof (Rom. 13:12-14).

The Bible teaches us that through the strength of the Lord (and not our own strength) we, that are Christ's, must crucify the flesh (Gal. 5:24), mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5-8), and keep our bodies under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). We are to resist the Tempter and not give in to him (James 4:7). All of these commands tell us that the desires will not be eradicated. However, we can walk in victory over them. God may supernaturally take away the desire for some addictive substances such as cigarettes and drugs, but in most other cases God expects us to exercise discipline over the flesh.

During Jesus' temptation (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14), He had to deal with food, glory desires, and power desires. There is no indication that the Father took those desires from Jesus. Instead, Jesus resisted the Tempter by standing on God's Word as we are to do (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

Mistaken Ideas Concerning God's Word

Some claim to have stood on God's Word in resisting the Tempter and still fell into sin. It is sad when someone allows the Tempter to lead them into sin, but then to claim that God's Word was ineffective in resisting the sin is simply adding insult to injury. Why should God be made a liar due to our failures?

God gives us His Word and tells us that by this we are to cleanse ourselves of sin and overcome (Psalm 119:9-11; John 15:3; 2 Cor. 7:1; Rom. 6.) His Word is a powerful weapon against the Tempter (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14; Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 2:22-26). As the great evangelist, D. L. Moody once said, "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible."

We cannot expect the Word of God to work automatically without doing our part. Simply running to the Bible to find a Scripture in the time of temptation and quoting it at the devil will not always suffice. We should be daily meditating upon God's Word:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psalm 1:1, 2)

The one who *meditates* in God's Word will be able to resist the counsel of ungodly people, will not go in the same directions as sinners, nor do any of the other things that God hates. This type of victory is promised only to them that *meditate* in God's Word and not use it as a lucky charm or some talisman to ward off temptation. In another Psalm David writes:

*BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. **Thy word have I hid in mine heart**, that I might not sin against thee (Psalm 119:9-11)*

The secret of David's success over sin was to hide God's Word in his heart. This Psalm goes on to tell us that the Word can be hidden in the heart by meditation (Psalm 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 148). This is something that must be done daily. Most people who fail are usually only casual readers of His Word and not consistent meditators.

Furthermore, regardless of how much "Word" we attempt to quote and memorize, we still must choose to obey it and allow it to take effect (Prov. 1:25-30; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Jer. 11:10; Neh. 9:16, 17; Jer. 13:10; 32:33). In his parable of the "seed and the sower," Jesus says, "*And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful*" (Mark 4:18, 19). We can actually let sin and temptation come in and choke the Word that we have heard and make it ineffective in our lives (see also Mark 7:13).

Therefore, the problem is not God's Word but our failure to obey it. God's word is full of supernatural power (Isa. 55:11; Luke 1:37; Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:13) but it is not *magical*. God's Word will give us new desires, but it is through those new desires that we crucify the desires of our flesh. In other words, God's Word may change our *willingness*, but we still have the full use of our *will*. The Word will not dissolve our will.

Mistaken Ideas Concerning the Holy Spirit

Some believe that the Holy Spirit's empowerment means no longer having to actively resist temptation. It is as if the Spirit will drive our bodies like those man-controlled robots in the Japanese anime shows. If the Holy Spirit could control us like that then we would not be told to avoid quenching Him (1 Thess. 5:19), grieving Him (Eph. 4:30), and to allow Him to fill us (Eph. 5:18). We are also able to resist Him (Acts 7:51).

The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He does not drive us as if we were some giant robot. He works with us and gives us victory over our flesh as we *walk* in Him (Rom. 8:1-13; Gal. 5:16-26). Paul says, "*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*" (Rom. 8:13).

It is through the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the flesh. He will give us supernatural power and strength to deal with our flesh, but He will not do the mortifying for us. Yield to the Spirit and obey His voice. Listen as He warns you about the Tempter's attacks. If you yield to the Spirit then you will not yield to sin. If you yield to sin it is because you did not *yield* to the Spirit.

Mistaken Ideas Concerning Prayer

Sometimes people expect that God will *eradicate* their fleshly desire through prayer. These people are often disappointed. God and the Tempter work in different ways. The Tempter works through the five physical senses. He will move you with *desire* and *feelings* of lust. God works through our *faith*. Faith is not based on our physical senses or emotions but on confidence in God's Word (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:17).

The disappointment comes when people believe that God has not answered their prayer because they are still struggling with the *feelings* or *desire* to sin. They believe that since God has not supernaturally removed

these feelings, then He has not answered their prayer. Therefore, they will blame Him for their continuing failure to walk in victory.

In Scripture we are told to crucify our flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24), mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5), bring our bodies under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), exercise discipline and self control (Gal. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:6), etc. As we learned in chapter ten, *Getting Help from God*, God has promised us the strength and grace to do these things:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:15, 16)

Prayer does not obliterate desire but gives us the grace to help in our struggle against temptation. The devil goes after us precisely because many of us are weak. Because of the weakness of our flesh Jesus told His disciples to pray (Mat. 26:41). It is only through prayer we can draw upon God's strength to defeat temptation. God never told us to resist temptation in our own strength. However, if we are without strength then we are responsible to go to God to obtain it (1 Chron. 16:11; Ps. 105:4; Isa. 30:15; 40:31). The Lord has promised to be our strength and to strengthen us (Exodus 15:2; Psalm 18:1, 2; 19:14; 22:19; 27:1; 28:7, 8; 29:11; 37:39; 118:14; 144:1; Isa. 49:5; Jer. 16:19; Hab. 3:19; Phil. 4:13). We are therefore commanded, "*be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*" (Eph. 6:10).

The person who truly wants God to “stop him or her” from sinning will follow Scripture’s teaching to go boldly to the throne of grace and get the *help* from temptation that is promised there (Heb. 4:15, 16).

God will not force His way and His will upon us (Matt. 23:37; Luke 7:30; Rev. 3:20; etc.) but will invite us to come to Him for help. If we want God to keep us from temptation then we must submit ourselves to Him and the Tempter will flee (James 4:7). If we choose to believe that God could have stopped us based on His omnipotence alone, we will fail. Never let a theological speculation about God’s attributes keep us from appropriating His promises of victory through prayer.

Mistaken Ideas about Resisting the Devil

Some have the erroneous idea that if they resist the Tempter once or twice then they will not have problems with him anymore. However, when they are again confronted with temptation they will say, “It’s not working.” In our age of fast food, cable TV, microwavable dinners, and express mail, we expect things to happen quickly. We feel there is no need to persevere or put out any real effort on our parts in anything. However, one of the Tempter’s “strengths” is that he does not quit easily. We may wound him for a short time, but he will always come back:

*And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from **him for a season** (Luke 4:12, 13).*

Jesus successfully resisted the Tempter, but only “for a season.” The New King James Version says, “....*he departed from Him until an opportune time.*” This means

that Jesus was going to have a continuous battle with the Tempter. We see this when Jesus had to deal with Peter's sincere desire to keep Him from fulfilling His mission: *"But Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get out of my way, Satan! You are tempting me to sin. You aren't thinking the way God thinks but the way humans think'"* (Matt. 16:23; God's Word Translation). While Jesus had to contend with the Tempter off and on throughout His ministry, at the near end of His life He could say, *"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"* (John 14:30).

I once heard the story of a man who went to a preacher for prayer. He asked the minister with tears in his eyes, "Please pray that the devil will leave me alone." The minister asked, "Do you want me to pray for you to die?!" The man said, "Of course not." The minister replied, "Well, that is the only way to get the devil to leave you alone. While we are in this world we will always have trouble with the devil."

We will have to contend with the Tempter the rest of our lives. As long as we remain a threat to the devil and his cause then he will attack us in various ways even after he has suffered a defeat.

If we are no longer a threat to him, it is usually because he has already defeated us. Therefore, persevere in resisting the Tempter. Do be discouraged because you have to confront the same temptations again. Continue to stand against them using the Word of God.

Mistaken Ideas about Deliverance

Finally, there are some who believe that all problems with temptation can be resolved by having someone cast a demon out of them. So many people have been deceived by this idea. Many have been disappointed to find that they still struggle with certain sins even after having had "deliverance" performed on them.

No doubt that evil spirits are involved in our temptations. Unlike God, Satan does not possess such attributes as omnipresence and omniscience and therefore cannot be everywhere present at the same time. Since Satan lacks God's abilities, it is necessary to employ many fallen angels and/or demons to do much of his dirty work. F. B. Meyer wrote:

He tempted our Lord, as he will tempt us. He will entice us to do wrong by every avenue of sense and will pour his evil suggestions through eye, ear, finger, tongue, and mind. If he does not attack us himself, he can set on us any one of his myriad of agents, who will get behind us and step softly up to us, whispering grievous blasphemies that we will think have proceeded from our own minds.¹

The Tempter seldom attacks us directly but has a myriad of devils working on his behalf. Demons are definitely involved in our temptations and sin.

However, the problem comes when individuals, especially those claiming to be Christians, use "demon possession" as an excuse to sin. A Christian may have trouble with demons but that does not necessarily mean that he or she is demon possessed and unable to control what he or she does. When you are fed the lie that you are not in control of your actions you will sin without restraint and blame it on demons.

Here are some Biblical examples: Satan entered into Judas and Judas allowed him to take possession (Luke 22:3-6), but rather than Jesus blaming the devil, he held Judas responsible for his actions (Luke 22:47, 48). Even Judas knew his culpability and did not blame the devil (Mat. 27:1-5). Ananias and Sapphira were in Satan's possession, but instead of being delivered, they were struck dead, proving their culpability (Acts 5:1-10). Elymas the sorcerer, rather than being "delivered" was

struck with blindness, showing that he was responsible for his own actions (Acts 13:8-13). More examples can be cited, but I believe that you get the point.

The Biblical records prove that demons can control non-Christians who are possessed by them. The church is in desperate need of doing the greater works of Jesus in healing and deliverance (John 14:12) in our day and age just as in apostolic times. God has made this ministry available to all believers (Mark 16:15-20). However, anyone who claims to be a Christian and claims at the same time to be controlled by demons is either ignorant of the authority given to the believer by Jesus (Luke 10:17-20) or need to be truly born again.

The problems that most believers need to confront are the temptations of the flesh that can be resisted apart from having to have a demon casted out. If one believes that going through deliverance will eradicate their sinful desire while they still live in the flesh, they are sadly mistaken and are being set up by the Tempter himself for failure.

Conclusion

God's Word is true. Anything contrary to it is a lie. If the Word of God seems to be ineffective in some area of our lives, then we need to check ourselves to find where the fault is rather than accusing God or His Word of failing us. The Tempter can be defeated, and we can live lives of victory daily. God has provided all that is necessary to do so. It is our part to know the TRUTH that makes us free (John 8:31, 32) and apply it to our lives. This means that you will have to repudiate false ideas about God and the Tempter. Victory over sin and temptation is yours. It will work if you work it correctly.

Appendix A

Scriptures Dealing With Specific Sins

In this appendix, I want to provide you with a brief Scripture index that deals with specific sins. This is by no means exhaustive. I do not intend to cover every single type of sin one can commit nor will I attempt to provide every passage from the Bible that deals with a sin. Neither will I need to. Remember that Jesus only needed *one* Scripture to resist the devil. He did not need to quote all the law and the prophets.

This index will provide you with easy access to some passages that will help you. However, you must meditate on these Scriptures in order for them to empower you in effectively overcoming temptation. Furthermore, remember to resist all the subtle and crafty excuses that the Tempter will bring to justify your falling into sin.

Abusing God's People (Church Leaders)

Church Leaders must learn the secret of servant-leadership. It is prevalent in our day for pastors and other leaders to abuse God's people psychologically and emotionally (and I have even heard of some cases where abuse has been physical) for money and control. Furthermore, church leaders should be careful about using the women in their congregation for their personal sexual gratification.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's

heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:1-4)

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (1 Tim. 3:2-4).

You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you...For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve... (Mark 10:42-45)

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 1:4).

Adultery

Adultery is a married person having sex with someone other than one's spouse or an unmarried person having sex with a married person.

Thou shalt not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18).

Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her (Lev. 18:20).

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death (Lev. 20:10).

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27, 28).

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Mat. 5:32).

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4).

Bad Temper (see also the Scriptures on *Violence*)

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret - it only causes harm (Psalms 37:8).

The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression (Proverbs 19:11).

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city (Proverbs 16:32).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:19).

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls (Proverbs 25:28).

He who is quick-tempered acts foolishly ... (Proverbs 14:17).

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil (Eph. 4:26, 27)

Child Abuse

Parents are required by God to discipline their children and to raise them properly. However, parents are not to abuse their children sexually or violently. Parents must be loving but firm when administering discipline.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged (Col. 3:21).

Complaining

And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among

them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp (Num. 11:1).

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer (1 Cor. 10:10).

Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness (Psalm 106:24-26).

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (Phil. 2:14, 15).

Disobedience to Parents

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy (1 Tim. 3:1, 2)

There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it (Prov. 30:11, 17)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be

well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3).

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord (Col. 3:20)

Even Jesus obeyed His human parents, leaving an example for the rest of us: And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart (Luke 2:51).

Disrespecting Church Leaders

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him (Num. 16:3-5).

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.... And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed (Num. 12:1, 2, 9).

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Eph. 4:8, 11-14).

Divorce

For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously (Mal. 2:15).

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Matt. 5:31-32).

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him (1 Cor. 7:10-13).

Doubt/Unbelief

There are some mild differences between doubt and unbelief. Doubt usually comes to a person who wants to believe but find it difficult due to circumstances. Unbelief is just outright refusal to believe what God has said. Both of these are sin and both are an insult to God. They both hinder answer to prayer and short circuit the power of God in our lives. The first weapon that the Tempter ever used on man was the sin of unbelief (Gen. 3:1-7)

And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief (Matt. 13:58)

And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Heb. 3:18, 19)

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a

wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord (James 1:5-7).

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (1 John 5:10).

Drunkenness/Alcoholism

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise (Prov. 20:1; New International Version).

He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich (Prov. 21:17).

Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags (Prov. 23:20, 21).

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.... At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder (Prov. 23:29, 30, 32).

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the

*LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands
(Isa. 5:11, 12).*

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but
be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).*

Failure to Attend Church Services and Fellowship Regularly

Some professing Christians fail to attend church services, Bible studies, prayer meetings, and other times of fellowship for various reasons. The Tempter has misled them into believe that it is not required. However, this is disobedience to God's commands and is, therefore, a sin.

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves
together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting
one another: and so much the more, as ye see the
day approaching (Heb. 10:25).*

*For as we have many members in one body, and
all members have not the same office: So we,
being many, are one body in Christ, and every one
members one of another (Rom. 12:4, 5)*

*But now are they many members, yet but one
body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have
no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I
have no need of you (1 Cor. 12:20, 21)*

*As every man hath received the gift, even so
minister the same one to another, as good
stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Pet.
4:10).*

*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify
one another, even as also ye do (1 Thess. 5:11).*

Failure to Properly Raise Children

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (Prov. 13:24).

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame... Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. (Prov. 29:15).

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? (Heb. 12:7-9).

Gluttony

Gluttony makes food a god by eating unhealthy and in excess. Food is to the glutton the same as alcohol is to the drunkard. It may be the “acceptable sin” among some Christians, but we must resist the temptation to overeat.

And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite (Prov. 23:7)

For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags (Prov. 23:21).

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God

shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body (1 Cor. 6:12, 13).

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Phil. 3:18, 19)

Gossip/Slander

He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter (Prov. 11:12, 13).

An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends (Prov. 16:27, 28).

For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults (2 Cor. 12:20)

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Tim. 5:13)

Greed/Covetousness

Greed (the King James uses the word “covetousness”) is to have a selfish desire to hoard up for oneself with no concern for others. A greedy person is not concerned with how they get what they want, as long as they get it. This is the epitome of ungodly selfishness.

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints (Eph. 5:3).

So put to death anything that belongs to the old nature, such things as sexual immorality, any kind of impurity of lust, all evil desires and greed, for that is idolatry. In His wrath God has condemned all such things and those guilty of such sin (Col. 3:5, 6; The Truth New Testament by Apostle Colin Urquhart).

Homosexuality

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination (Lev. 18:22).

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them (Lev. 20:13).

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:26, 27)

*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor **homosexual** offenders (1 Cor. 6:9; New International Version)*

Idolatry

Idolatry is not limited to the act of worshipping a statue (a replica of a false deity) or angels and demons as so many continue to do today. Idolatry is also the act of making anything a priority over worship and obedience to the true God, be it family, money, job, television, books, sex, food, ministry, etc. It is also relying upon that thing to fulfill the needs that only God can fulfill. Idolatry destroys faith in the true God. There is much idolatry in the church today, and it must be overcome and resisted.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3).

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:6).

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry (1 Cor. 10:13, 14)

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know

him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen (1 John 5:19, 20).

Ingratitude

Instead of remembering the great things the Lord has done and thanking Him, we become upset with Him due to every little trial we encounter in this life. We must always have an attitude of gratitude towards God.

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee (Deut. 28:47, 48)

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole” (Luke 17:12-19).

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy (2 Timothy 3:2).

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall

*keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus
(Phil. 4:6, 7).*

Lack of compassion

Compassion is the desire to relieve others of their suffering. God is compassionate and we are to be just like Him. We have to resist the desire to be uncompassionate towards the hurting and suffering.

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (James 2:15, 16)

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17, 18).

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him (Luke 10:33, 34).

Jealousy/Envy

Remember that jealousy is one of the first sins among humans that lead to murder (Gen. 4:1-7).

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:3)

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (James 3:14-16).

Judging Others

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven (Luke 6:37).

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ..... Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way (Rom. 14:10, 13).

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? (James 4:11, 12).

Lack of Love

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his

brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:14, 15).

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:7, 8).

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:20, 21).

Laziness

How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man (Prov 6:9-11).

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame (Prov 10:5).

As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him (Prov. 10:26).

The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute (Prov. 12:24)

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:10)

Lying

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (Exodus 20:16).

Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another (Leviticus 19:11).

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another (Ephesians 4:25).

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds (Colossians 3:9).

Masturbation

There really is no clear cut passage in the Bible that deals with the subject of masturbation (sex with one's self).

However, this is a very common problem today. While the Bible does not directly address it (though some have used Scripture out of context in an attempt to do so) it can require the use of the imagination (imagining oneself with another person) or pornography. It could also possibly be idolatrous. Please see the Scriptures on pornography and resist the Temptation to masturbate.

Pornography

If a man looks on a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:28)

I will set no unclean thing before my eyes (Psalm 101:3).

I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? (Job. 31:1)

Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies (Hab. 2:15; NIV).

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

Prayerlessness

This is the sin in which we fail to talk to our Heavenly Father in interceding for others and depending upon Him to meet our needs and direct and guide us.

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you (1 Samuel 12:23)

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour** (1 Tim. 2:1-3)*

Pride

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance and the evil way and the froward mouth I hate.... (Proverbs 8:13)

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though they join forces, none will go unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5).

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18).

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:6, 7).

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of

God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:5, 6)

Racism

Racism is hatred for someone based on their skin color, ethnicity, or cultural background. Many people were taught racism as children but Christians must learn to set aside such ungodly teachings and love one another regardless of so-called racial differences.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:28-29 Revised Standard Version)

And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him." (Acts 10:34-35 RSV)

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:9-11 RSV)

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Rev. 5:9).

Rebellion against Civil Authority

This includes breaking the laws set by the government such as traffic violations, failure to pay taxes, disrespecting police officers and other authoritative figures, etc.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Rom. 13:1-4).

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work (Titus 3:1).

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well (1 Pet. 2:13, 14).

The balance comes in when the civil authority demands that you do something that goes directly against God's Word. In such cases one must

choose to obey God and disobey the civil authority
(Daniel 6:1-28; Acts 5:26-29).

Shacking Up and other Sexual Immorality

This is known in the Bible as “fornication.” Fornication is two people having sex outside of a covenant marriage relationship. This could be people “shacking up,” casual sex off and on, sex with a prostitute, etc. The Tempter seems to use sex as a primary temptation in this world today.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:2).

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Rom. 13:4).

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:5)

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9, 10)

Stinginess

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against

thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee (Deut. 15:9).

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again (Prov. 19:17).

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).

Unforgiveness/Vengeance

This is the temptation to hold a grudge against someone who may have wronged you and to look for a way to pay them back.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15).

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses (Mark 11:25).

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Colossians 3:13).

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the

Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people (Hebrews 10:30).

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile (1 Peter 3:9-10)

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Violence

While it may be necessary to use violence in protecting oneself and loved ones from criminals, random acts of violence due to anger are prohibited. We must resist the Tempter in this area (see also “bad temper” Scriptures).

The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth (Psalms 11:5).

...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4; See also Micah 4:3).

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work (Proverbs 24:29).

...Do violence to no man (Luke 3:14)

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also (Matt. 5:34).

Worry

Worry is the sin in which we fail to completely trust God.

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1Peter 5:7)

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me (John 14:1).

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Thou wilt keep {him} in perfect peace, {whose} mind {is} stayed {on thee}: because he trusteth in thee (Isaiah 26:3).

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety (Psalms 4:8).

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet

your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, {shall he} not much more {clothe} you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day {is} the evil thereof (Matthew 6:25-34).

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

Conclusion: Meditate on these passages, especially the area in which you struggle most. God's Word has the power to destroy the Tempter. If an area is not covered here then take the time to search the Scriptures that cover your struggle. Verbalize them during temptation and you will have the same success that Jesus did (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14).

Notes

Chapter One

1. Luke 10:19 could be used to understand the authority and dominion that Adam more than likely possessed over his enemy had he chosen to exercise it. A study of the two different Greek words translated as “power” in this passage show that though the enemy had might, Adam could have had an easy victory over his assault. The enemy possesses miraculous power (*dunamis*) but Adam had authority (*exousia*) over the devil. The **International Standard Version** translates Luke 10:19 as follows: *Look! I have given you the authority to trample snakes and scorpions and to destroy all the enemy's power, and nothing will ever hurt you.* Satan was more than likely aware of the fact that Adam’s authority was backed by God’s great might, a might greater than any Satan possessed. Therefore, Satan in his crafty wisdom assaulted the man and woman in another way: through the vehicle of *temptation*.

2. There are many Christians who believe that the fall of Adam was a part of God’s eternal plan. There are some who go as far as to teach that God foreordained the fall of man. I strongly disagree with both. Both ideas make God the author of sin in some form or another. Furthermore, such teaching cannot be found anywhere in Scripture and neither is it consistent with God’s pain, anger, and regret over the sin of man. Not too long after man’s creation, the author of Genesis tells us, “*And LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart.*” (Gen. 6:6; A Conservative Version). If God was this upset over man’s depravity then surely he never had it as part of His plan for man and He certainly did not ordain it.

3. Some might ask, “Why are we asking God to not lead us into temptation” (Matt. 6:13)? Is it possible that He Himself would lead us into temptation if we fail to ask Him not to?” God Himself does not bring temptation our way. We are told that when we are tempted that we are not to blame God for it (James 1:13-15). Craig Keenan says that possibly the Aramaic wording behind this verse suggests that Matt. 6:13 means: “Let us not sin when we are tested” (see Keenan, Craig S., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, p. 63). The **New Living Testament** translates it this way: “*And don't let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*” I believe this understanding resolves the difficulty. Temptation is inevitable but God is not it’s source. He is the *deliverer* from the purpose that the tempter designed the temptation for, which is to cause us to sin. We will elaborate on this further in our study as well as on why Jesus was *lead* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Chapter Two

1. See our future publications in which I will quote some of those who have advocated this teaching and demonstrate that their ideas do not line up with Scripture.
2. This goes directly against statements written by the well known 16th century reformer, John Calvin:

"I admit that in this miserable condition wherein men are now bound, all of Adam's children have fallen by God's will." (Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 23, Section 4)

"And it ought not to seem absurd for me to say that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his descendants, but also meted it out in accordance with his own decision. (Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 23, Section 7)

Many of the followers of Calvin's theology have not even bothered to soften this unbiblical premise:

"Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret councils of God." (Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 234)

I would wonder how Mr. Boettner was able to get access to the "secret counsels of God" and give us this information. It is absolutely absurd to say that God "willed" or "decided" the fall of man, making God into some type of schizophrenic deity who tells man what to do to keep from falling but secretly ordaining that such should happen. Such a contradictory God who actually grieved at the sins of His creation (Gen. 6:5-7) cannot be found within the pages of Scripture. Yet this teaching is once again becoming popular in many Christian circles.

3. Caldwell, Happy *The Word System: The Secret of God's Power Revealed* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1981), p. 23
4. *Ibid.*, p. 26
5. *Ibid.*, p. 28
6. Barnes, Albert **Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible**, E-Sword edition

7. Marston, Paul; Forster, Roger **God's Strategy In Human History** (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 200). See pages 6 and 7 for an excellent and more thorough explanation of this point. I might also point out that this is one of the best books one could invest their hard earned dollars in when understanding the ages old conflict between God and Satan (as well as a solid refutation of deterministic theology).

8. The Bible does not tell us how God is able to exercise this ability although a number of theories have been offered throughout the centuries, most being absent of any concrete Biblical support. Yet Scripture does show us times in which God has revealed the future in exact detail (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-8; Mat. 26:34, 69-75) and other times in which He did not know the future for certain (Gen. 22:12; Ex. 13:17; Isa. 5:3-7; Jer. 3:6, 7, 19, 20). Perhaps He limits this ability by His own sovereign choice (in order to respect the free choices of His creatures). Therefore, it doesn't appear to be necessary for God to know every future event just because he has the ability to know it anymore than it is necessary for Him to control all events in history just because he has the power to do so. Due to current medical technology, potential parents have the ability to know the sex of their child before it is born but many prefer not to know because they want to be surprised. We should not fault God any more than we would fault such parents for not exercising their prescience. One thing is also certain is that God knows contingent histories (what could have been) and He is also able to change the future that He knows to something different when prayer and/or repentance is offered (Psalm 81:10-16; Isa. 38:1-8; 48:18, 19; Matt. 11:21; Mark 14:37, 38).

9. Notice the phrase, "which I commanded them not" found in each passage. Once again Scripture stands opposed to the teaching of John Calvin who wrote, "He has plenty of reasons for comfort as he realises that the devil and all the ungodly are reined in by God, so that they cannot conceive, plan or carry out any crime, unless God allows it, indeed commands it" (The Institutes of Christian Religion, pp.81-82). Calvin's deterministic theology would have God *commanding* that men sin which is the exact opposite of what God says in these passages of Scripture.

Chapter Three

1. Strong, James. The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Copyright © 1984 by Thomas Nelson Publisher's.

2. Dathe, translation of the Historical Books, Hals, 1784, 8vo. As quoted in Twopeny, Richard **Dissertations on Some Parts of the**

Old and New Testaments which have been Supposed Unsuitable to the Divine Attributes (London: C & J Riverton, 1824), p. 83

3. Ibid, p. 84

4. It is interesting to see how some of the more modern English translations attempt to resolve this seeming conflict between 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1 by substituting “God” for “Satan” in the former:

And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he [Satan] moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.” (21st Century King James Version)

And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he [Satan] moved David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.” (Third Millennium Bible).

And the Lord caused his anger to burn forth again in Israel, and Satan stirred up David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah. (1851 Brenton’s English Septuagint)

Young’s, which is a literal translation, decides to replace “God” with “adversary:”

“And the anger of Jehovah addeth to burn against Israel, and an adversary moveth David about them, saying, `Go, number Israel and Judah.’”

However, in light of revelation that came centuries later that was lacking at the time that 2 Samuel was written, I believe that this is a valid re-interpretation of the passage.

5. Rev. J. R. Dummelow (Editor) *The One Volume Bible Commentary* (New York, The MacMillian Company, 1908, 1909, 1936)

6. To justify this, Rotherham writes the following: “That Hebrew Grammars distinctly avow occasion or permission to be sometimes the sense of verbs which ordinarily signify cause can be verified by a reference to the Hebrew Grammar of Gesenius, say in the admirable translation of Dr. Benjamin Davies (p. 120). After stating that the verbal form (conjugation) called piel denotes intensity and repetition, this grammar adds: “It often takes the modifications expressed by

permit, to declare or hold as, to help.” (Rotherham, Joseph **The Emphasized Bible**, Bradbury, Agnew & Co., ©1902, p. 919)

7. Jackson, Thomas **The Providence of God**, Viewed in the Light of Holy Scripture, © by John Mason, p. 295

8. *Ibid.*, p. 301

9. Plues, Robert *The Peculiarities of Calvinism Tested* (London, GJ Stevenson, 1862), pp. 63, 64. Calvinistic theologians are the main opponents of this idea of permissiveness. Plues notes that in order for John Calvin to maintain his position on “predestination” and ‘sovereignty, it was necessary to oppose this. He writes, “...the doctrine of Calvin, where he says— ‘It is not probable that man procured his own destruction by the *mere* permission, and without any *appointment* of God.’ The Rev. E. WATSON well observes—‘ Calvin had reason for this; for to have allowed this distinction’ (of mere permission) "would have been contrary to the main principles of his theological system, which are, that ' the will of God is the necessity of things,' and that all things are previously fixed by an absolute decree; so that they *must* happen. The consequence is, that he and his followers involve themselves in the tremendous consequence of making God the author of sin; which, after all their disavowals, (and we grant them sincere) will still logically cleave to them; for it is obvious, that by nothing can we fairly avoid this consequence but by allowing the distinction between determinations to do, on the part of God, and determinations to *permit* certain things to be done by others. The principle laid down by Calvin is destructive of all human agency, seeing it converts man into a mere instrument; whilst the other maintains his agency in its proper sense, and, therefore, his proper accountability.” (Italics his). Since so many in the church, including many translators of the Scriptures, have been influenced by Calvinism in some form (if not wholeheartedly), we can see why there is a reluctance to consistently recognize the idiomatic language of Old Testament Hebrew and to see that there are numerous passages that have made God the cause of something that should have only made Him the one who permitted the act or circumstance in not preventing it for reasons that are often clearly stated within the context of the passage.

10. See the Hebrew lexicon at <http://www.studylight.org>

11. Fisk, Samuel **Calvinistic Paths Retraced** (Murfreesboro, TN: Biblical Evangelism Press, 1985). An interesting study of this is found pages 67 to 76 of this very informative book. On these pages Dr. Fisk gives evidence concerning the Bible translations that conditioned men’s thinking in this manner and also talks about how

these “questionable concepts” were carried over into the King James Version.

12. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

13. The same can be applied to the situation with King Saul (as well as some others). Scripture says, “*But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him*” (1 Sam. 16:14; see also 16:16; 19:9 as well as Judges 9:23 and Psalm 78:49). Notice the distinction between the “Spirit of the Lord” and “evil spirit from the Lord.” Readings of some English dictionaries distinguish between “of” and “from”. Of means “the cause, source, means, author or agent bestowing.” From implies “departure” and “moving to a distance.” The Spirit of the Lord was upon Saul by God’s direct agency. Some questions to ponder on this would be why an evil spirit, if indeed from God, is driven away or put at bay by David (who is now anointed with God’s Spirit) playing music, even if only for a short period. Why would this spirit, if sent from God, move Saul to attempt to kill David?

The evil spirit from the Lord could have been just like the one in Micaiah’s vision that he related to Ahab and Jehoshaphat who volunteered to trouble Saul and was given permission by God to do so due to Saul’s persistent rebellion (1 Sam. 13:11-14; 15:19-23). Furthermore, when the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, this left Saul without divine protection from Satanic onslaught (Luke 11:24-26). We are warned not to give any place to the devil through our sin (Eph. 4:24-27; 2 Cor. 2:10, 11; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Pet. 5:8). We are also taught that when we persist in sin that God will turn us over to Satan (Matt. 18:32-35; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 1:20), which implies removing His protection from over us and allowing Satan to have his way in our lives (see Job 1:9-12 to see how this could possibly happen). This is not something that God does arbitrarily but permits to happen after He has given us numerous warnings and we still decide to persist in rebellion.

14. Vincent, Marvin R. Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III, pp. 141-143

15. Rotherham, Joseph Bryant The Emphasized Bible: A New Translation (London, Bradbury, Agnew, & Co. LD, 1902), p. 87. In his notes, Rotherham further explains, “... the translation in the text above would seem fairer to the average Occidental mind, and is thoroughly justifiable on two grounds (1) of the known character of God, and (2) the well attested latitude of the Semitic languages which are accustomed to speak of occasion as cause”

16. One commentary says, “I shall harden the heart of Pharaoh’ means: I know that I shall be the cause of Pharaoh’s obstinacy – my

commandments and wonders will be an occasion, an inducement to an increasing obduration of his heart.” Cited in Marston and Forster, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, p. 262

17. Keil & Delitzsch in their commentary on the Old Testament seems to agree this is not in reference to the ceremonial laws: “The ceremonial commandments given by God were good, and had the promise attached to them, that obedience to them would give life; whilst the threats of punishment contained in the law are never called חקים and משפטים. Those statutes only are called “not good” the fulfilment of which did not bring life or blessings and salvation. The second clause serves as an explanation of the first.”

18. For example, the **Amplified Bible** says, “*Wherefore also I gave them [over to] statutes that were not good and ordinances whereby they should not live and could not have life*”; The **God’s Word Translation**: “*I also allowed them to follow laws that were no good and rules by which they could not live.*”; The **New Century Version**: “*I also allowed them to follow rules that were not good and laws by which they could not live.*”; The **New International Version**: “*I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by.*”; The **New King James Version**: “*Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live*”; The **New Living Translation**: “*I gave them over to worthless customs and laws that would not lead to life.*”; And of course **Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible**: “*I myself, indeed, suffered them to walk in statutes which were not good, - And regulations in which they could not live.*”

19. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible

20. John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

21. Bullinger, E. W. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968, 2008), p. 570

22. *Ibid.*, p. 571

Chapter Four

1. Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament

2. See the Hebrew lexicon at <http://www.studylight.org>

3. Strong, James, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Strong elaborates further by giving the primary and secondary meanings of the word: “literally and figuratively: - arise (up). (cause to) ascend up, at once, break [the day] (up), bring (up), (cause to) burn, carry up, cast up, + shew, climb (up), (cause to, make to) come (up), cut off, dawn, depart, exalt, excel, fall, fetch up, get up, (make to) go (away, up), grow (over), increase, lay, leap, levy, lift (self) up, light, [make] up, X mention, mount up, offer, make to pay, + perfect, prefer, put (on),

raise, recover, restore, (make to) rise (up), scale, set (up), shoot forth (up), (begin to) spring (up), stir up, take away (up), work.” Notice that out of a variety of meanings used, *burn* is only one usage of the word.

4. The Sacrifice of Isaac: A Biblical Study An Article in The Christian Spectator Vol. VII (London: Elliot Stock, 1866), pp. 286, 287

5. Ibid., pp. 287, 288

Chapter Five

1. However, the early church fathers and many other theologians in the first centuries of the church believed that both Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 was a reference to the devil. For example, Origen (182-254) writes, “But every one who prefers vice and a vicious life, is (because acting in a manner contrary to virtue) Satan, that is, an "adversary" to the Son of God, who is righteousness, and truth, and wisdom. With more propriety, however, is he called ‘adversary,’ who was the first among those that were living a peaceful and happy life to lose his wings, and to fall from blessedness; he who, according to Ezekiel, walked faultlessly in all his ways, ‘until iniquity was found in him.’” (Origen, *Contra Celsus*, Book VI, Chapter XLIV)

While the church fathers are not infallible in the least, many of their beliefs are closer to first century Christian traditions and teachings.

2. Plummer, Alfred *The Epistle of S. John* (Cambridge: University Press, 1896), p. 126

3. Even here the mystery concerning sin is revealed. We are told that Satan is the responsible agent for it: “*For the **mystery of iniquity** doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall **that Wicked be revealed**, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him, **whose coming is after the working of Satan** with all power and signs and lying wonders*” (1 thess. 2:7-9). The passage is speaking about the antichrist who will be under Satan’s control (Rev. 13:1-8). While there may be an element of mystery to sin, the Bible opens this mystery to the understanding of God’s children and shows that its source is completely in Satan. All of the other speculations tossed around by theologians concerning the mystery of sin have no biblical basis, especially those that claim that God desired sin to come into the world for unknown reasons or reasons we could never understand. See our upcoming book, “Good God, Evil World” for more insight into the so-called mystery of evil.

4. Simpson, Albert B. **The Christ in the Bible Commentary** (Volume V) (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994), p. 411

Chapter Six

1. Strong's Concordance
2. Barnes, Barnes Notes
3. Robertson, Archibald Thomas Word Pictures in the New Testament
4. Ibid.

Chapter Seven

1. Since Peter did yield to temptation by denying Christ, did his faith actually fail? If Satan was successful in his sifting of Peter, it was not merely because God granted him permission. The sifting that occurred in Peter's life could possibly be due to a failure in his faith. Satan desired to sift Peter but whether or not Satan would have his desire depended much on whether or not Peter would stand in faith.

Anyone who can deny his Lord three times is may possibly be experiencing a "faith failure." Thank God that due to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Peter was able to bounce back and stand as an example to all of us.

Some might ask here, "If Peter's faith failed then does that mean that Jesus' prayer did not get answered." That is certainly not what that means. We must remember that God does not violate free-will. Jesus prayer moved the Father and the Holy Spirit to work on Peter's behalf, but Peter also needed to pray as well, something that he neglected to do (Matt. 26:40, 41). However, Jesus tells Peter, "and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The influence on Peter as a result of our Lord's prayer would bring him back from his fall.

This should be an encouragement for anyone who has prayed for a loved one in any capacity, be it for their salvation, their deliverance, their healing, etc. And yet when you have prayed for them it appeared as if the exact opposite happened. Do not allow the Tempter to plant the false idea in you that God did not hear your prayer on that person's behalf or that it was not His will to grant your godly desire for that individual. Remember that God is dealing with free moral agents and needs time to work on them. Never give up praying for any loved one. Jesus saw his prayer answered for Peter later and now Peter has obeyed by writing two epistles that have strengthened the brethren for several centuries.

Chapter Eight

1. Barnes, Barnes Notes

2. Robertson, Archibald Thomas Word Pictures in the New Testament

Chapter Nine

1. Robertson, A. T. Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911), p. 68
2. Nee, Watchman The Spiritual Man Vol. III (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 9
3. Thayer's Lexicon, E-Sword Edition
4. Vine, W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 319.
5. Bruce, F. F. The New Century Bible Commentary: I&II Corinthians (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 38, 39
6. Richards, Lawrence O. The Victor Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1994), p. 205.

Chapter Ten

1. Torrey, R. A. How to Obtain Fullness of Power (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 75
2. Marsh, F. E. The Spiritual Life or Helps and Hindrances (Des Moines, Iowa: The Boone Publishing Co., 1958), p. 13
3. Clarke, Adam Discourses on Various Subjects Relative to the Being and Attributes of God (Vol. II) (New York: Melrath and Bangs, 1831), p. 62
4. Ibid, pp. 62, 63
5. Various Ministers The Christian Treasury (London: Johnstone and Hunter, 1896), p. 274
6. Murray, Andrew Divine Healing (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), p. 139
7. Austin-Sparks, T. In Touch With the Throne (Bethesda, MD: Testimony Book Ministry, 1992), p. 9
8. Ibid., pp. 9, 10

Chapter Eleven

1. Hobbs, Herschel H. An Exposition of the Four Gospels (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 47

Chapter Fourteen

- Meyer, Frederick B. Some Secrets of Christian Living (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), p. 101

Invitation and prayer for salvation

To become a TRUE Christian One must be born again -1. John 3:1-7

We must be born of the water and the Spirit. This water is not speaking of water baptism but of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 5:25-27).

There is only ONE avenue into heaven and that is to be born again. Water baptism, church membership, religious duties, giving to the poor, living a moral life, taking the Lord's supper, being a member of a denomination, or an INTELLECTUAL reception (vs. a heart reception) of Jesus Christ cannot save you. You must be born again.

Are you born again? If you are not you will not spend eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ but instead you will enter into eternal damnation. I urge you to consider accepting Jesus Christ as your savior.

To be born again is very simple. You need only accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Why not give your heart to Him today. All you need to do is ask Him to come into your life. Here is a simple prayer to pray:

Lord Jesus

I ask you to come into my heart right now. You said in your word that if I confess you with my mouth and believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead then I will be saved (Rom. 10:9). I recognize that I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness and a change in my nature. I repent of all my sin. I know that all that come to you, you will not reject (John 6:37). Thank you for your dying for me so that I can be born again. Thank you Father for Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit for coming in to my life. AMEN.

You are now born again. It's that simple. By the way, welcome to the family!

Invitation to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit

What Is This Baptism? He is a Gift to be given to the believer - Acts 2:38. Every born again Christian has the Holy Spirit in them but not every Christian has received the BAPTISM (immersion) with the Spirit.

He is also a PROMISE that can be claimed - Acts 1:4. A promise implies something that one has a legal right to claim. You need not beg, plead, and do things to earn this blessing. He is a gift so it's free. He is a promise that is claimed by faith. He can be received AFTER one is born again - Acts 19:1-6.

Though it is better to ask God for this baptism in your own way, below is a prayer that may help you if you are at a loss as to how to ask:

Heavenly Father

The Lord Jesus promised that I can receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with other tongues. You promised that if I ask then I would receive exactly that which I have asked you for. Father I thank you in the name of your son Jesus and I yield myself to you Holy Spirit. Thank you for baptising me with Your Spirit.

Now just lift your hands and receive. Don't forget to share this blessing with others.

Prayer for Bodily Healing

It is always God's will to heal and that healing should be expected when we ask Him. You can also cry out to God expect Him to answer you. Below is a sample petition you can use in seeking God's healing:

Dear Father

You stated in your word that you are the Lord that heals (Exodus 15:26). Lord, I understand that in the Hebrew this comes from a compound name, "Jehovah-Rophe" which means that you are a covenant healer and that it is your nature to heal. Lord, you promised that if I served you, you would bless my bread and water and take sickness away from the midst of me (Exodus 23:25). You also promised that the prayer of faith will save the sick and that you would raise them up (James 5:14-16).

I know that my Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, has paid the purchase price for my healing by His death and resurrection (Isa. 53:4, 5; Matt. 8:16, 17; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 8:11). I believe that all of my sickness were laid on Him and I do not need to bear them. So I declare that according to your word and the promises that you have given that I receive healing by the stripes of my Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 2:24; Mark 11:24).

Father, based on the authority of your work I speak to my body and I command the sickness to leave in the Name of Jesus (name what the sickness is). I claim healing and health for my body and emotions and I thank you for it Father. Hallelujah!

Note: Sickness is not always due to personal sin. However, if the Lord should reveal to you that your sickness may be the result of personal sin, then take the time to repent

and ask Him to forgive you. He is loving and compassionate and quick to forgive.

Sometimes the reception of healing is warfare and one should be ready to fight. Nonetheless, if you should feel that your faith is lacking, we have resources available that will help you to build it. We love you and we want to help you to receive all that God has promised.

Prayer for Victory over Temptation and Sin

Sin is not in the will of God for anyone and has never been a part of His plan. God knows the destructiveness of sin. God's love for you is so abundantly strong that he desires to protect you from anything that would harm you and destroy the joy and happiness he wants to provide you.

If you are constantly faced with temptations and/or you are in bondage to some type of sinful habit (pornography, smoking, drinking, lying, etc.) and you want to be free, God is more than willing to set you free from this entanglement. At VWCF we believe that the born again Christian can walk above sin and have complete victory over it in this life. Temptations will come (and being tempted is not sin because even our Lord was tempted, yet without sin) but you have the power to resist them.

A single prayer is not enough to walk in complete victory. You must exercise your power to resist. However, prayer to God is the BEGINNING because He will provide you with the supernatural ability to resist temptations of all kind and release you from any bondage that holds you. Below is a sample prayer that you can pray:

Dear Father

First I ask you to forgive me for the times I have yielded to temptation and sin and made no effort to resist it. Father I receive this forgiveness based on the authority of your Word to me (1 John 1:9). My desire from this point on is to do those things that please you.

I thank you for my Lord Jesus who came to deliver me from my sins (Matt. 1:21). I know that Jesus bore all of my sin on the cross and because of my identification with Him, I have died to sin. Therefore by faith in your Word, I declare myself

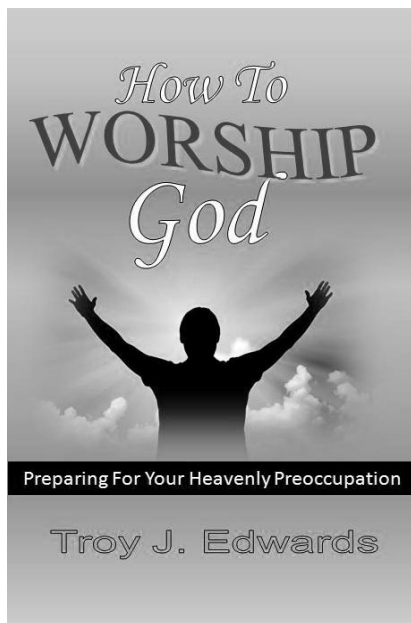
dead to sin and freed from its bondage (1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:1-8, 22; John 8:31-36). Father, I now ask that by the power of the precious Holy Spirit that you will enable me to walk fully in Him so that I will no longer fulfill the desires of my flesh (Gal. 5:16). Lord, by your power and strength I choose to keep my body under subjection so that I will not fulfill carnal desires (1 Cor. 9:27).

I thank you Father for making a way of escape for me from all temptations that come my way (1 Cor. 10:13). Lord help me to quickly recognize the way of escape that you have made for me during those times of testing. Thank you for setting me free from temptation's power to pull me in and cause me to sin.

Satan, by the authority given to me over you through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I resist you and every evil desire you attempt to bring my way (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9). I am no longer in your kingdom or under your control (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 1:12-14) so you no longer have any authority over me. I command this sinful habit (name the habit/sin) be broken from me in Jesus' Name. I declare on the authority of God's Word that I am fully and completely free.

From this point forward, trust in God's power to enable you to walk a free, clean, consecrated and holy life. He loves you and He will help you.

How To Worship God



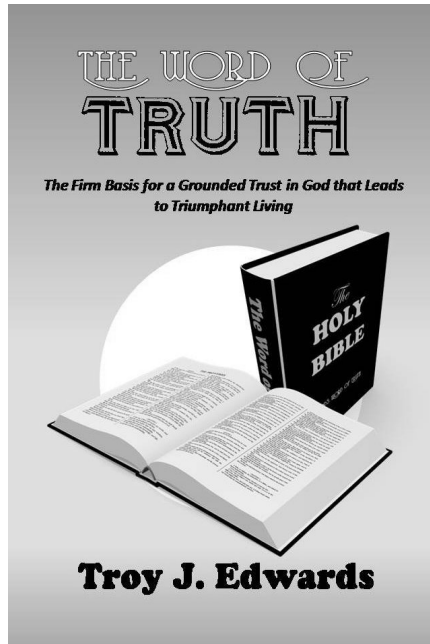
Did you know that God actually has to seek worshipers who will worship Him according to His standards? This means that such worshipers are not readily available. Furthermore are you aware of the fact that worshipping God in His prescribed way will not only bring you victory in spiritual warfare, but also enables you to receive answers to prayer that you would not otherwise receive?

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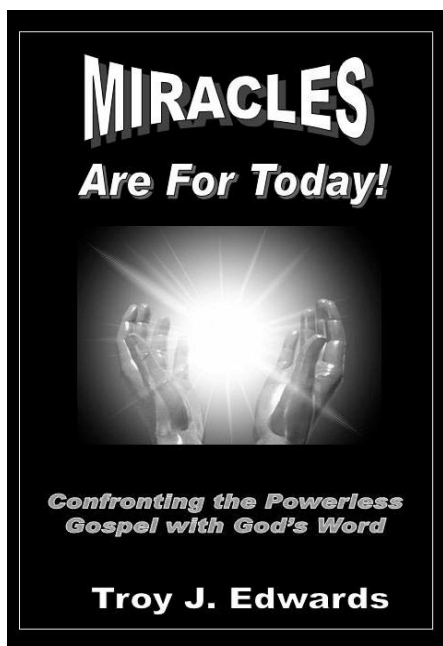
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About the Author

TROY J. EDWARDS is the founder and senior pastor of *Victorious Word Christian Fellowship* in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. VWCF is a thriving fellowship committed to evangelism and biblical teaching. Pastor Troy is the author of several books and publisher and editor of *Victorious Word Magazine*.