

Breaking Free From Temptation

Introduction. Hunters often “tempt” ducks or some other kind of birds with a decoy. The real ducks will see them and come in for a closer look. When the curious ducks fly in closer, the hunter shoots and the family has duck for dinner. He placed something in front of them which piqued their curiosity and when they responded from a natural instinct, he took advantage of that weakness to kill them.

Temptation works in much the same way, and it is the downfall of many good, righteous people. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul explained to the brethren that he was not above sin and he even spoke of being disqualified or rejected as a Christian. If that warning were not enough, he went on to explain in chapter 10 of the Israelites’ self-indulgence. He began by commending them for their faithfulness to God, but in vs. 6-10, they became an example for us not to crave things, worship idols, act immorally, try the Lord or grumble. Paul mentioned their behavior as an example again in vs. 11, and then finally exhorted them in vs. 12-13.

If any of the Corinthians were feeling arrogant about their strength, Paul told them to remember the Israelites who fell even though they had all those blessings in vs. 1-4. Everyone is going to endure temptation, but Paul had some encouraging words for the Corinthians that you can greatly benefit from today.

I. ***Make Up Your Mind About What It Is***

- A. Paul described it as a “temptation.” The word means “a testing, trying or proving.” H. L. Mencken called temptation “an irresistible force at work on a moveable body.” In the Bible, the word is used in a good sense (John 6:6; Hebrews 11:17) and in a bad sense (Matthew 16:1; 22:18; 1 Corinthians 10:9).
- B. You need to understand the source of temptation (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). Satan is a tempter, but Hebrews 11:17 clearly implies that God also “tries” in a sense, so when someone speaks of temptation, it is critical to understand the differences between God and Satan.
 1. When the Lord “tests” someone, He does it in order to improve them. God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13-16), yet we see Him “testing” His people (1 Peter 1:6-7). God allowed Job to suffer by the hand of the devil in order to demonstrate his righteousness and faith (Job 1:8).
 2. When Satan “tempts” someone, he does it to cause them to sin (1 Corinthians 7:5; Revelation 2:10). In Matthew 4:1, Satan’s purpose was to make Christ sin, thus disqualifying Him for the purpose of redeeming man.

- C. When you are being pulled toward sin, realize that you are encountering temptation. Being tempted is not wrong; however, succumbing to temptation is sin.

II. ***Make Up Your Mind About How It Feels***

- A. Temptation "takes" you in its grip, for it has tremendous power. Sometimes people are tempted to commit the same sins over and over in their life. They never can break the cycle. The gospel has the power to save people (Romans 1:16). However, sin also has power, and unfortunately a lot of those who are wrapped up in sin will never break free.
- B. Different people have different temptations. For example, drinking a beer has absolutely no tempting effect on me. However, a Christian who used to be an alcoholic may have an extremely difficult time fending off the temptation that does not phase me.
- C. James uses the word "entice" in 1:14. Just like the duck hunter with a decoy, "entice" meant to catch something with the use of bait. The power of temptation is based upon your desire to have fun or to have something which is not good for you.
- D. Sin seems far from "destruction and perdition" (Hebrews 3:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:9). In fact, the majority of the time sin seems fun. If someone just won the lottery, it is doubtful that they would feel like winning was a "snare," "destruction" or "perdition."
- E. Some ridicule the Christian way of life and say that they cannot have any fun. Sometimes that is true because their definition of fun goes well beyond ours. You can have fun, but there is a great difference between fun and pushing yourself to temptation.

III. ***Make Up Your Mind About How It Is Experienced***

- A. Paul described the experience as "common to man." Another version says that it is "the kind that normally comes to man." The word is used in other scriptures to denote "human." Your temptations are not beyond what you can bear but you must understand that you will have to bear them.
- B. It should be encouraging to understand that your temptations are not greater than anyone else's. Instead of fretting over who has the worst temptation, you can encourage others to put away their sin.
- C. In order to make up your mind about how temptation is experienced, you need to explore the different ways you can be tempted:
 - 1. You can be tempted by the threefold nature of sin (1 John 2:16).
 - 2. You can be tempted by a lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:5).
 - 3. You can be tempted by being too confident (Galatians 6:3).
 - 4. You can be tempted by a desire for riches (1 Timothy 6:9-10; Matthew 13:22).

5. You can be tempted by getting too close to the wrong crowd (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- D. When you are experiencing temptation, you are in good company. Some of the most famous people in the scriptures were tempted:
1. Adam and Eve were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-6).
 2. Abraham was tempted to lie to Pharaoh about Sarai (Genesis 12:11-20).
 3. Moses was tempted to glory in himself (Numbers 20:8-13; Psalm 106:32-33).
 4. Achan was tempted to take some of the spoils at Ai (Joshua 7:21).
 5. David was tempted to commit adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-5).
 6. Solomon was tempted to turn away from God because of his wives (1 Kings 11:4-8).
 7. Peter was tempted to deny the Lord three times (Matthew 26:69-75).
- E. One great example of encouragement is the temptation of Jesus (Hebrews 2:18). You can take courage because Jesus knows the difficulty of temptation. Although it was terrible that our Lord had to be tempted like a common man, His temptation and strength proved Him to be a worthy Savior and proved His care for you in your time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).

IV. ***Make Up Your Mind About How To Escape***

- A. God will give you the way out. You will not have to bear temptations greater than your ability. He gives you the strength to patiently endure temptations which come your way (2 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 4:18).
- B. If the Lord is faithful enough to provide you a way out of temptation, then you must be wise enough to use it! Although the Lord will not physically come down and keep you from temptation, He does give you ways to escape:
 1. When you are being tempted, think about what you are doing. Jesus encouraged His disciples to watch and pray for deliverance from temptation (Matthew 26:41).
 2. You also need to flee the scene of temptation (2 Timothy 2:22; Genesis 37:7-12). Whatever tempts you the most, stay away from it (Proverbs 1:10-19).
 3. Inform yourself about what Satan is trying to do to you (2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:8).
 4. Treasure the word of God in your heart (Psalm 119:11; Matthew 4:1-11). Use that word to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17).

5. Live by faith in Christ and depend on God's grace (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:14; 1 John 5:4-5).
- C. The surest way of escape is to realize that you need to walk by the Spirit of God and not carry out the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The Christian has the assurance of God, while the non-Christian is left to battle temptation and sin alone.

Conclusion. Mark Twain said, "It is easier to stay out than get out." John Dryden added, "Better shun the bait than struggle in the snare." With all the help and assurance you have, it is not necessary for sin to have dominion over you (Romans 6:7; 1 John 1:7). I wish it could be as easy as speaking the words, but it is not. Unfortunately, almost everyday you can hedge yourself into situations where you may compromise your faith. You may think it trivial, but your friends and Satan see it as very significant.

Paul groaned about the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in Romans 7:15-25. He said the members of his body wage war against the law of his mind. In vs. 24, he proclaims his wretchedness and in vs. 25, he finds the solution.

If you hate what you are doing and how you are living because of sin, the only answer is Jesus Christ. The only way to be free from sin is a life in Christ. We want to help you find that life. It is time to lay aside the deeds of darkness and become a new creature.