

“Make No Provision For The Flesh”

Introduction. Kitty Genovese was the young woman who was murdered in a New York residential section in 1964 while at least a dozen neighbors watched from their windows. During the course of the 30-minute assault, no one even telephoned the police. Studies have uncovered some surprising facts about these people. Interviews revealed that they were not totally indifferent as many had suspected. The reason nobody reacted was because each person thought someone else would take the initiative to get help.

Few Christians are as “awake” as they should be (Ephesians 5:14), so in Romans 13:11-14 Paul warns Christians to wake up and take the initiative. He tells them to avoid sin (“put off,” “lay aside”) by not making provision (“to think about something ahead of time”) for sin. He then tells them to “put on” Christ which means to become so inundated with His mind in thought, feeling, and action that one resembles Him, reproducing the life He lived.

Without the gospel of Christ, darkness covered the world; but the darkness, or night, was far gone and the day was at hand because the full revelation of the gospel was nearing completion. Now men walk in darkness only by choice (1 Thessalonians 5:7-10). In our study today we are going to consider temptation and sin (James 1:13-16), and how to avoid sin.

I. ***Steps To Sin***

A. Temptation.

1. Temptation is defined as “a solicitation to do evil.”
 - a) God is without the capacity for temptation. The nature of evil makes it inherently foreign to God. God and evil exist in realms that never intersect (Habakkuk 1:12-13).
 - b) He is aware of evil but untouched by it, like a sunbeam shining on a dump is untouched by the trash.
2. We are tempted by Satan (Job 2:6; Matthew 4:1; 1 Corinthians 7:5).
 - a) Satan moved David to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1; cf. 2 Samuel 24:1). Satan filled the heart of Judas (John 13:2; cf. 12:6). Satan filled the heart of Ananias (Acts 5:3; cf. vs. 4). In every instance we note the exercise of freewill all along the way. The devil has no power over us that we do not give him.
 - b) There is a huge difference between testing our faith and tempting us to do evil (1 Peter 1:6-9; 4:12). God allows trials in which temptations can occur, not to persuade us to sin, but to move us to greater endurance (cf. James 1:2-4).

3. It is not a sin to be tempted. Christ was tempted (Hebrews 4:14-15), yet He lived without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22).

B. Carried away and enticed by lust.

1. "Carried away" was often used as a hunting term to refer to a baited trap designed to lure an unsuspecting animal into it. "Enticed" was a commonly used fishing term to refer to bait which would lure its prey from safety to capture and death.
 - a) Suppose a fish is swimming along minding his own business; then suddenly, he sees a delicious, attractive lure, and from inside comes a strong desire to swallow the lure. Nothing has happened yet -- he has only been tempted.
 - b) Soon he is swimming around the lure -- still no problem. Suddenly, his inward desire becomes so strong that he swallows the lure and becomes trapped.
 - c) There was nothing wrong with the water, lure, hook, or string. The desire of the fish was the cause of his entrapment. It came from within.
2. We are tempted and carried away by our lusts. Lust is defined as "a strong, ardent desire of the soul to obtain something."
 - a) The word for "lust" is used in the scriptures in a good sense, but it is translated as "desire" (Luke 22:15; Philippians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:17).
 - (1) The desires that we have exist because God made them a part of us. There is nothing wrong with the desire for happiness, food, or clothing.
 - (2) But it becomes a sin when it leads us to seek what is forbidden, thus violating the laws of God.
 - b) So while there may be external inducements placed before us by Satan to cause us to do wrong, none of them would have any power if there was not something within man over which they may have power.
 - (1) In other words, lust makes evil more appealing than righteousness. So the real problem is not a tempter from without, but the traitor within.
 - (2) This can be seen in the lives of some prominent people in the Bible (cf. Eve, Genesis 3:6; Achan, Joshua 7:21; David, 2 Samuel 11:2).

C. Conception.

1. Shifting from the metaphors of hunting and fishing, James now uses the process of childbirth to illustrate his point (cf. Job 15:35). Lust does not stand still.

2. In every gospel the same word for "conception" is used to indicate that they "took" or seized Jesus (Matthew 26:55; Mark 14:48; Luke 22:54; John 18:12).
 3. The Rabbis used to say that evil desire at the beginning is like the thread of a spider's web; afterwards it is like a cart rope.
- D. Sin and death.
1. The "child" which is born from the conception of lust is sin and spiritual death (Ezekiel 18:1-4, 20; Romans 5:12; 6:23 Ephesians 2:1; 1 Timothy 5:6).
 2. There is a definite progression. What is desired, rationalized, and willed is actually done, committed, and accomplished.
 3. We wonder why our young people have so much trouble with sin, but sin is fun (Hebrews 11:24-25). If it were not fun, there would be no desire to commit sin.

II. ***How To Avoid Sin***

- A. When we are tempted, we can walk away without having to sin! The battle must be fought in the mind first, where sin is conceived.
- B. It should go without saying that the earlier in the process we determine to resist, the greater the likelihood we will avoid sin. Conversely, the longer we delay resisting, the more likely the actual sin becomes.
- C. There are several tools that can be successfully used to avoid sin.
 1. Know the Bible (Nehemiah 13:3; Job 23:12; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; cf. 1 Timothy 1:13).
 2. Be pure in heart (Matthew 5:8; Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:1-2).
 3. Believe in God and His promises (1 Corinthians 10:12-13; James 4:7).
 4. Pray for strength (Matthew 6:13; Luke 22:39-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
 5. Avoid tempting circumstances (Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:24; 1 Peter 4:1-2).

Conclusion. Some are not ashamed of their sin while others realize the gravity of their situation (Jeremiah 6:15; Luke 18:13). He has promised to forgive us if we obey Him, either in repentance and baptism to be born into His family, or in confession of our sins, repentance, and prayer if we are Christians who have sinned.

Instead of indulging in the sins of Romans 13:13, we are to clothe ourselves with the characteristics manifested by our Lord -- put ourselves completely under His authority, and let Him always be our guide. Do not make any provision or forethought for your lusts. Do not think that you are

able to stand against any temptation without God's help. Too many have made that assumption and spent a lifetime in regret. We are to make His life our life. Will you make that life yours today?