

We are all tempted (Temptation Introduction & Pt 1)

Today we begin a new series of teachings on the word temptation in the Holy Scriptures. There are fourteen occurrences of the word tempt, sixteen of temptation, eight of temptations, twenty-five of tempted, two of tempter, one of tempteth and seven of tempting, in the Holy Scriptures. According to the Oxford dictionary the meaning of temptation is "tempting or being tempted; incitement esp. to sin." and the word tempt means, entice, incite esp. to sin (to do, to action esp. evil one)..." In this our first study on the word temptation, we will cover four points:-

1. the devil is the tempter,
2. the tempter tempts believers,
3. every man is tempted when he is drawn away with his own lust,
4. there is no temptation that we experience that has not been used before.

Let us provide a little more detail on each of our four points:-

1. The devil is the tempter

Mt 4:1,3 *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

See also 1Thess.3: 5.

Under the meaning of the word tempter, the Oxford dictionary asserts that the tempter is "the devil." Hence, the dictionary agrees with the Holy Scriptures of truth, the old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan (see Rev. 20: 2), is the tempter, he is that one that provokes us to do that which is sinful in the eyes of God. It is the serpent that is named in Genesis as the one who tempted Eve. The Scripture says that the serpent beguiled Eve (see Gen.3: 13), he lured her, he tricked her into disobeying the word of the Lord by convincing her that God did not say what He *had* said. The tempter cast doubt on the words of God, as he has down through the ages and continues to do today with over 200 different versions of what God said, that *all* cast doubt on what the Lord *actually* said. Each word has been written down and preserved for us today in the English text of the 1611 Authorized Bible.

It is the devil who knows what to tempt the heathen with to keep him desiring the things of this world more than the things of God, and it is the devil who knows what to tempt each believer with to lure him away from the things of God.

What does the tempter use to tempt both Christians and non-Christians?

Beautiful woman (see Prov.6: 24), a flattering woman (see Prov.6: 24, 7: 5). Proverbs 6: 26 says; *For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread.*

Love of money is the root of all evil (see 1Tim.6: 9,10). And note, it is not money itself that the devil tempts us with, it is the desire for money, it is when we covet money that we err from the faith (see 1Tim.6: 10).

Can we add any more devices that the devil uses to tempt people? In our response to this question, let us consider the account of the Lord Jesus Christ being tempted by the devil for 40 days (see Matt.4: 1-11, Mk,1: 12, 13, and Lk.4: 1-13).

The first temptation was using the human desire for food to satisfy hunger, a weakness that was used to tempt the Word of God. Hence the devil attacked the Scriptures when Jesus was physically weak (see Lk.4: 3, 4).

The second temptation was using the human desire for power and glory, and to deny the glory of the Father, and the worship of the Father (see Lk.4: 6 -8).

The third temptation was using the human desire to tempt God (see Lk.4: 9-13).

And so we see from the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ that the devil has more devices in his arsenal to tempt man with, than simply beautiful woman and the love of money. Let us remember that the devil is the tempter.

2. The tempter tempts believers today

1Thes 3:5 *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.*

See also Acts 20:19, Gal. 4:14 & Jas. 1:2.

Having established that the tempter is Satan let us now be assured that although he has blinded the minds of them which believe not (see 2Cor.4: 4), he also tempts believers today, just as he has throughout the Bible.

Examples of God's children that were tempted:-

Israel was tempted (see Ps.95: 8).

Hannah was provoked (see 1Sam.1: 5, 6). In Ps.78: 56 there is a link between tempted and provoked, hence we have considered verses where believers have either been tempted or provoked.

David was provoked by Satan (see 1Chr.21: 1).

The Lord Jesus Christ was tempted (see point one, Lk.4: 9-13, Matt.4: 1-11 & Mk.1: 12, 13).

Paul was tempted, he was buffeted by Satan (see Acts 20:19, 2Cor.12: 7 & Gal.4: 14).

Believers today are, and will continue to be, tempted (see Gal 6:1, 1Thes 3:5).

Do you remember the last time you were tempted, or provoked by Satan to sin against God? Did you succumb to the temptation?

Don't beat yourself up, remember that David, a man who had a perfect heart before the Lord (see 1Kgs 15: 3) was provoked by Satan to number the people, and he did so. I am not saying, give in to temptations that the devil tempts us with, I am saying, that if we have a moment where our flesh is weak and we succumb to the devil's temptation, then (a) don't beat ourselves up and (b) don't go and tell the world but (c) *do something about it*. You don't have to confess it to me or any other brother or sister in the Lord, but only to your God.

Remember, our adversary is not flesh and blood, but rather he rules spiritual wickedness in high places. He rules the darkness of this world (see Eph.6: 12), he hates us, he attacks us and has an armoury of devices with which to tempt us, that will destroy, divide, deceive, discourage, and delay us. Let us encourage each other to remember who is doing the tempting, who is seeking to destroy us, so that we do not apportion the blame for the temptation to our brothers or sisters or friends or spouses, but to the devil who is the tempter.

3. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away with his own lust.

James 1:13 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.

As we mentioned in our previous point the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil for 40 days in the wilderness with no food. And the purpose of his tempting was to accuse Him (see Jn.8: 6). But in this point we learn that a man can be tempted of his own lusts. So on one hand the devil can actively put things in front of a person to tempt him, as he did the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the other hand a person can lust in their own heart and be drawn away by those lusts. David exhibited this human frailty when he was drawn away by the lust of the flesh and the lust of his eyes when he saw Bath-sheba in 2Sam.11: 2-4.

Such is a common temptation especially for men, but I guess women are not immune to such a device as is depicted on TV shows like Cougar Town, which portray a 40 year old woman being drawn away of her own lust for a younger man. Because of such propaganda, your average non-Christian family is likely to view such behaviour as normal. And it would appear it is not restricted to a specific age group like early twenties, where it is generally recognised that young men have a high level of testosterone. For even Silvio Berlusconi, a 76 year old Italian politician and media billionaire, has decided to get engaged (whilst still married) to a 27 year-old, who the UK Telegraph reports as being "beautiful on the outside and even more beautiful on the inside."

It is now acceptable in society for a man to leave one relationship and lay with a different woman or to be with one woman and desire another. This happens with Pastors in the church, who get dismissed from their Pastoral responsibilities when it comes out that they have been laying with a young woman in the congregation (see <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2012/07/31/hammond-pastor-dismissed-for-improper-relationship-with-young-woman/>). No one, whether in the church or outside of the body of Christ, is immune to being drawn away by the lust of their eyes or the lust of the flesh. And the Lord knows this device and has provided Christians with help, by encouraging us not to make provision for the flesh (see Rom.13: 14). Which means we don't open doors to the devil, we don't open doors to the things of the flesh and tempt ourselves or test ourselves. Because when we do that, we are making provision for the flesh. We are doing something to prepare for our flesh to lust, and hence we are inviting ourselves to sin. And that is our old nature, that is our old man, our flesh. And Christ died and was raised that we too might walk in newness of life and not in our flesh (see Romans chapter 6).

To make provision for not being tempted, for not being drawn away by the lust of our eyes, pastors have been known to *not* put themselves in a room alone with a woman other than their wife (which is how the pastor mentioned in our previous example got drawn away, he was counselling the woman), or *not* get into a car alone with a woman that is not their wife. In doing so, they are thus making an effort not to be drawn away by the lusts of their flesh. Let me suggest that this is a worthwhile discipline for any married couple to adopt. It is one of many safeguards that can be put in place to enable us to "not make provision for the flesh".

Let us pray for each other, for those of us who are married, for those who are single, that we would not be drawn away from what God has given us, by the lusts of *our* flesh, and in doing so be a good ensample to our young.

4. There is no temptation that we experience that has not been used before.

1Cor 10:13 *There bath 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.]*

Sometimes when we experience temptation, we think that we are the only one in the world that has succumbed to such weakness, such wickedness, such sin, but what Satan or his messenger tempts us with, is nothing new. The devices he uses today are those he used on David, Paul, Martin Luther and every other believer down through the centuries.

The devil knows our individual weaknesses, he knows that for some of us, we are drawn away of our lust for money, others are tempted like David was when a beautiful woman steps in front of us, others lust after power. The Roman Catholic church adds to the word of God when they include the lust of food or as they call it, the sin of gluttony from their interpretation of Phil.3: 19 "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly." They then add more burden to their worshippers by making up the sin of spiritual gluttony. The following is an extract from the on-line Catholic Encyclopedia; "[St. John of the Cross](#), in his work 'The Dark Night of the Soul' (I, vi), dissects what he calls spiritual gluttony. He explains that it is the disposition of those who, in [prayer](#) and other acts of religion, are always in search of sensible sweetness; they are those who 'will feel and taste [God](#), as if he were palpable and accessible to them not only in Communion but in all their other acts of devotion.' This he declares is a very great imperfection and productive of great evils."

It wouldn't surprise those who know the writings of Dr. Peter Ruckman (a prolific Protestant writer, preacher and teacher of Holy Writ) who points out that "there is one religion on earth whose priests address a piece of BREAD as 'My Lord and my God'...and then put it into their BELLY (Rom.16: 18)!!" According to Dr Ruckman, the reference in Phil.3: 17-19 is to warn us to beware of those who "talk the most about the 'cross'...and follow the leadership of the most un-Pauline man who ever lived (see vs 17), and their reputation for 'minding earthly things' is as universal and so well known that to this day a Jew thinks that Christianity is Catholicism." And therefore Phil.3: 19 has nothing to do with the lust of food, or the sin of gluttony, or one of the seven deadly Roman Catholic (RC) sins. So when we talk about the temptations of man or the lusts that tempt him away from God, let us source our information on those temptations from Holy Writ, as we would any other doctrine.

The bottom-line, whatever temptation you have seen in movies, whatever temptation you get tempted with, they are not new to the world, but they are all devices that have deceived, destroyed and discouraged men and women for centuries.

But our verse in 1Corinthians 10 (verse 13) reminds us, God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to withstand, and with all temptation will provide us a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. There is no need therefore to re-invent the wheel (so to speak) when it comes to addressing the temptation of riches, or power, or the temptations that occur when we are drawn away by the lusts of our flesh. Just because we are in the 21st century and there is a 'new solution' to every problem, that is not the case for temptations.

We will spend more time on how we deal with temptations in later studies, but for now let us say that the weapons of our warfare and the defences we use, are no different to those in the first-century church, they are no different to those tools that the Lord used, i.e. prayer, fasting and the Holy Scriptures.

Having said what we have said in this our first study on the word temptation, let us say it again. We have covered four points which include:-

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