

Limit your temptation? (Pt. 2 temptation)

This is the second study in our series of teachings on the word *temptation* in the Holy Scriptures. In our first study we covered four points:-

1. the devil is known as the *tempter*;
2. all believers will be *tempted*,
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.

In this study we will consider three points:-

1. be sober that we enter not into *temptation*,
2. be vigilant that we enter not into *temptation*,
3. when we show charity we are not easily *tempted*.

Let us add a little more detail to our three points:-

1. Be sober that we enter not into temptation.

1Pet 5:8 *Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

In our first study on this word, we mentioned that: every man is *tempted* when he is drawn away with his own lust. In this teaching we will expand on that idea as we consider what *we* can *do* to help limit our *temptation*.

1Pet.5: 8 does not use the word *temptation*, but refers to our adversary and encourages the reader to be sober because the devil walks about seeking whom he may devour. And given that *temptation* is not dealt with results in a person being devoured, there is a link between temptation and devour and hence, I make an application from 1Pet.5: 8; that we should be sober that we enter not into *temptation*.

When we look at sober in the Oxford dictionary we find two meanings; “(1) Not drunk...(2) Make or become less wild, reckless...” Which of these meanings applies to our verse, or is there a different meaning in the Scriptures?

According to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible the Greek word behind the English word sober, is *neepho* (occurs six times) means; to abstain from wine (keep sober), i.e. (fig) be discreet:- be sober, watch” (the same Greek word is also translated twice as ‘watch’). Therefore, when we are under the influence of alcohol we are unable to be discreet. See whether you can find that meaning in the NIV version of the Holy Scriptures which says “Be self-controlled” or the Amplified Bible, which says: “Be well balanced (temperate, sober of mind)...” Both have changed God's Holy Writings and distorted the meaning.

So the command to ‘be sober’, involves us refraining from alcohol which makes our vessel less alert than we are normally. For example when we are under the influence of alcohol we do not respond as fast to impending danger. It is no different to the law of the land that says ‘be sober’ if you are going to drive. Why?

Because if you drink and drive you are more prone to speeding, driving foolishly and not being alert to conditions that distract the driver in the event of danger. The government spends millions of dollars a year on advertisements warning people about the consequences to drinking and driving...but that does not stop people of all ages getting behind the wheel after they have spent a night out with their mates drinking. The advertisements can show people dying, young ones being maimed for life, and it still does not prevent people from drinking and driving.

When a believer drops their guide and drinks, nothing may happen, as is the case with many of those who drink and drive. But, what if we drink and get tipsy and our mouth starts attacking our family, or our brethren. What example does such behaviour show our young (see 1Tim.4: 12)? When we drink and open ourselves up to attack, are we doing the best we can to prevent ourselves from being tempted? When a believer is tipsy, they are inviting Satan to tempt them, they are making provision for the flesh (see Rom.13: 14).

And given that our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour, and he is an unseen enemy who hates us, wants to destroy us, and deceive us, discourage us and delay us; should we not be doing our utmost to prevent ourselves from being attacked, rather than making it easier for us to be attacked. The devil may not attack us when we drink, as is the case when we drink and drive a motor vehicle. But if we do get attacked in either example, the consequences can be life changing. In a motor vehicle, we could injure an innocent child, or at home our tongue could crush our son or daughter for no reason, other than the alcohol loosening our lips. Be sober that we not enter into temptation.

I remember drinking up until 6 years ago. Karen and I would have a glass of wine on special occasions and gradually I began to feel that I was to cease drinking (except for a little wine for my often infirmities - see 1Tim.

5: 23). And then one day we were having a glass of wine over dinner and I looked in the mirror and my face had blown up with red blotches. That was it for me, from that day on, I have made a point of being sober, of abstaining from alcohol and therefore limiting at least one device that the devil uses to weaken my defenses, I chose not to be tempted by drink.

If strong drink is used outside of 1Tim.5: 23, then we may open the door to being tempted by the devil, so let us pray for those in our families and friends who have a soft spot for alcohol, who get drawn away from the things of God, by strong drink. Let us not be proud in our prayers, lest we too are tempted, but rather let us, with all meekness and gentleness pray that the knowledge of our daily warfare would be more apparent each day to our brethren. And just as the soldiers in the army who are under the influence of alcohol are less likely to see the dangers ahead, so believers in this spiritual battle are less likely to discern incoming attacks when they consume strong drink. Therefore, let us be sober, that we enter *not* into *temptation*.

2. Be vigilant that we enter not into *temptation*.

1Pet 5:8 *Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

See also Mt 26:41.

In the same verse, that commands us to be sober, we are also told to be vigilant. The word only occurs twice in the Holy Scriptures, once in our verse in 1Pet.5: 8 and the other in 1Tim.3: 2. On both occasions it is associated with the word 'sober'. According to the Oxford on-line dictionary the word vigilant means "keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulty", hence it won't surprise you that the two Greek words for vigilant are also translated in other passages as 'watch', which aligns to the dictionary meaning. Hence, I understand when different versions of the Holy Scriptures, like the NIV, or the RSV (RC edition) use the word 'watch' instead of vigilant.

How does vigilant compare to sober? Sober is something that we refrain from, whereas vigilant involves us participating. We are actively keeping a careful watch, we are actively looking out for possible danger. We are not being asked to refrain from something that changes our ability to keep watch. Here, we are commanded to be vigilant, as is a soldier in the New Zealand Army, or British Royal Navy, or US Marine Corp. If the soldiers fall asleep whilst on watch, they leave the door open to attack. Infantry troopers are no good to their commander if they fall asleep whilst the enemy is lurking about, seeking whom he may devour. But if the soldier has his binoculars close at hand and is vigilant, keeping watch out for the enemy then he is less likely to be destroyed by his adversary.

It is no different to those who were required to be the lookout on the fatal Titanic voyage, those who took the crow's nest position. The greatest ship of its time destroyed when those in the lookout had lost their binoculars and were relying on their own unaided eyesight to see icebergs. History tells the story (see <http://www.awesomestories.com/disasters/titanic/summary>), how they saw 'a black mass' but it was too late. For a few minutes those in the crow's nest were less than vigilant and the whole ship suffered the consequences.

It is no different in our spiritual battle, if we fall asleep when we should be actively watching, we leave the door open to attack. This was Jesus' point in Mk.14: 37. Lets review what took place:

Mk.14: 37, 38 *And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly [is] ready, but the flesh [is] weak.*

Jesus' original request to the disciples was to 'sit ye here, while I pray' (see verse 32). The Lord Jesus went away to pray, and left his disciples to sit, and he returned three times and each time He found them sleeping (see verse 37, 40 & 41), such is the weakness of our flesh. When he returned he commanded them to watch and pray, *lest ye enter into temptation* (see verse 38, or Mat.26: 40, 41). Matt.26: 40 indicates that Jesus was most concerned about them not watching for *one hour*, lest they enter into temptation. He wanted them to be vigilant, to be alert to the temptations of the devil. Which is exactly the same instruction that we read in 1Pet.5: 8 *be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

Regardless of our role at work, at home, or in a particular ministry, we are to be vigilant, we are to keep our eyes open for our adversary, lest we be *tempted*.

Let us pray for ourselves and the young in the faith whom, like new born babies may spend their time sleeping and therefore be less alert, less vigilant and more prone to *temptation* and attack from the devil.

3. When we show charity we are not easily tempted.

1Cor.13: 4,5 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.*

See also 1Tim.6: 9.

Charity, which is greater than faith and hope (see 1Cor.13: 13) can help us when we are *tempted*, because according to verses 4 & 5, charity is not easily provoked, and the word *tempt* is linked to provoke (see Ps.78: 57).

What happens when we have a proud tongue? We are being tempted by the devil and open the door to much sinfulness. Whereas when the Lord Jesus was being tempted (see Lk.4: 1-13) his tongue did not vaunteth himself or puff himself up, but rather was meek and lowly (see Matt.11: 29).

What happens when a man is proud? Something will occur in his life to bring him to a fall (see Prov.16:18, Eze. 30: 6 & Hos.5: 5) and from there, if he has ears to hear and eyes to see, he will repent and daily seek the Lord's help to close the door on this *temptation*.

In 1Timothy chapter 3 Paul is writing about the office of a Bishop. He identifies that a Bishop should be vigilant, sober (as per our first two points, see verse 2) and continues on to say, that he should *not* [be] *a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil*. Therefore, suggesting that when a person is young in the faith (a novice, the word only occurs once in the Holy Scriptures) they are most likely to be lifted up with pride, which is contrary to showing charity. And when they are lifted up with pride they will fall into the condemnation of the devil. 1Tim.3: 6 leaves no room for doubt, when we have a proud, arrogant attitude, we *will* fall into the condemnation of our adversary. But that can change when we show charity, when we vaunteth not ourselves, we are then not easily provoked, we are not easily *tempted*.

This is exactly what I have found in my walk with the Lord. The more pride I exhibit, the more I puff myself up and vaunt myself, the more easily I am provoked, or fall into temptation. Whereas, the more charity I show my family and brothers and sisters in the Lord, the less I fall into temptation and the less I am provoked.

It is no different when a brother is overtaken in a fault and those who are spiritual are encouraged to restore such a one in meekness (that is with charity), considering themselves, lest they also are tempted (see Gal.1: 6). Why?

Because charity is not easily provoked. Have you ever been involved in discussions with another brother that was overtaken in a fault and shown them meekness? It is likely that you did not fall into the condemnation of the devil because of those discussions, but to the contrary were likely blessed by God for speaking with such charity.

Have you ever been overtaken in a fault and other brothers have come to you with pride and arrogance, and put you down to lift themselves up? It is likely that those who lift themselves up, later fell into the condemnation of the devil because when we are proud and therefore uncharitable, we are easily provoked. Think about the last discussion you had when things got heated, whether it was between you and a friend, a spouse or other family member.

What happened when you took a 'mightier than thou' attitude? What happened when you said things to lift yourself up and put the other person down?

What happens to the discussions when one person takes the high ground?

From my experience no one benefits from the discussion, no one gets their point across and the devil has a field day, and you only end up with division. This type of behaviour is typical in marriages where the couple are not saved and therefore do not have an authority to submit to, where the woman will often assert herself and the man tries to lift himself up. They both spend their time, vaunting themselves, with the end result being division and so both fall into the temptation of the devil. The reason for division between a married couple could be money (the love of which is the root of all evil, see 1Tim.6: 10), lusts of the eyes or lusts of the flesh, the pride of life (as mentioned earlier) or when they deprive each other of themselves (see 1Cor.7: 5).

What limits our *temptation*? Fervent charity which covers a multitude of sins (see 1Pet.4: 8).

Therefore, let us pray for each other that we would show charity, one to another, that we would not be easily provoked, that we would not fall into the *temptation* of the devil.

Having said, what we have said, let us say it again. In this our second study on the word temptation we have covered three points:-

1. be sober that we enter not into *temptation*,
2. be vigilant that we enter not into *temptation*,
3. when we show charity we are not easily *tempted*.