

GOSPEL GAZZETTE

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Temptation

How Can We Resist?

What exactly is temptation? Temptation means the act of being tempted. I guess the real question is, "What does it mean to be tempted?"

Webster's dictionary says being tempted means, "to entice to do wrong by the promise of pleasure or gain."

Strong's Concordance has an additional definition of temptation... Not only is temptation defined as an enticement to sin, but it also defines temptation as the trial of man's fidelity, integrity, virtue and constancy. (Being Firm in belief and faithful)

We see here just by these two definitions, that not only do temptations entice us to sin, but that temptations are actually trials for us.

We are tempted to do something-wrong EVERYDAY.

Temptations come in all kinds of forms. We each have our own individual weaknesses, and because of those weaknesses, we are tempted to not resist or control ourselves, which

causes us to say or do something wrong.

The temptations we experience in our lives are not a result of some evil test that "God" is giving us. We can read this in the bible:

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: ¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

*(James 1:13-15)
(KJV)*

We see that it is not God that is tempting us, but instead our own lusts and desires. If we continue to pursue what ever it is that we are being tempted by, we will ultimately sin.

How many trials do you think you have in one given day? Be careful when you think about your answer to remember that temptation (being enticed to sin) does not "start" with "actions."

What I mean by that is before we actually "do" something, we're "thinking" about it first. Just because we don't actually shout and "say" the words we're mentally saying to ourselves when an uncaring driver cuts us off, or when we feel we're not being treated right, doesn't mean we're "innocent." It only means we refrained from saying what was on our mind. Certainly a wise man bridles his tongue, but we need to do even better than that. As difficult as this may seem, we are told in the writings of Paul that we need to renew our "mind."

*² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
(Romans 12:2)
(KJV)*

Long before we can commit that sin physically, either by saying or doing something wrong, the act is being carried out in your thoughts. Paul

is telling us that we need to renew (or to make fresh) our minds. We need to be conscience of what we're thinking about to be sure that we are doing that good and acceptable will of God. If we can stop ourselves from thinking wrongful thoughts, we will be able to resist the temptations for doing or saying something wrong.

Now, knowing that just thinking about doing something can put you in danger, how many trials in one day do you actually pass? We need to understand that Paul was not speaking of the "passing" thought...we all have them. He was speaking about the mental concentration about something, the mental pictures and imagination of saying or doing something wrong. Jesus also warns us in the book of Matthew that if we give any length of time to "thinking about doing something wrong, that you're already committing the sin in your heart (mind).

The importance of this warning for us is to understand that to actually stop us from

"doing" something wrong, we've got to control our "thoughts" first.

Whew...so, how do we resist such temptation? When we are tempted to do or say something wrong, how do we stop it? Jesus tells us:

*⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
(Matthew 26:41)
(KJV)*

Jesus knew that his people had the desire to serve him, but that they would be tempted in every way to do the wrong thing. He tells us to pray for strength so we are not caused to be tempted and do something wrong.

Many of us, after doing something wrong may say to ourselves or to others that might question us, "I just couldn't help it!" Many times we want to blame others for why we messed up. What does God say about that?

¹³ 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.

*(1 Corinthians 10:13)
(KJV)*

We are told that your temptation isn't unique to just you but to anyone with that weakness. God also says that we will not be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, and with the temptation, he will give us a way to escape it. We know from our previous reading that the temptation is not put there by God, but by our own weaknesses. Here, we are given some encouragement by understanding that we have a way to escape being tempted. The main thing we need to understand is we need to WANT to NOT do something wrong. When our focus turns away from doing something wrong, to wanting to resist doing it, we will be able to see a way to turn from doing it.

What if we mess up? What if our temptation

gets the best of us and we do something wrong? Is God angry with us?

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. (Galatians 4:14) (KJV)

We see that even though we mess up, God does not despise us or reject us. God understands that we are human and will make mistakes. What he wants for his children is for us to have the “willing heart” to do the right thing. When we mess up, he wants us to be truly sorry (God calls that repentant). When someone is “truly sorry” for making a mistake, they try harder not make that mistake again. If you continue to make the same mistake over and over again with only the “words” of an apology, then you are not truly sorry. It’s the actions “after” you say you’re sorry that actually proves whether you are or not.

Is there a blessing we receive from resisting

temptation? If we are really trying to do the right thing, and we’re keeping our focus not at doing something wrong, but turning away from it when the temptation comes upon you, does God reward that? We can read a couple of scriptures to answer that.

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. (James 1:12) (KJV)

We read in the first part of this message that temptations are actually trials; or better known as “tests.” If we’re passing our tests, or this scripture reads, “enduring temptation,” God promises us a gift. He promises us the gift of the crown of life. That crown of life is described as the eternal life that Jesus will give to us “at his return.” That promise is given to each and every one of us that love him. Your love for God is not shown by what you “say to him,” but rather HOW you live your life.

Resisting temptation (doing something wrong) is very difficult. The first part of the battle is just having the “desire to do good.” If you have the desire to want to do that good and pleasing will of God, he also promises you something else. We have read earlier that he will make a way for you to escape the temptation. Look what else he will do for us:

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation ... (Revelation 3:10) (KJV)

Just before Jesus comes back, the Bible talks about how many people will be tempted to do the wrong thing. He says this temptation will be upon the WHOLE WORLD. But, to those that have kept his word (those that have been doing the right thing) he will also keep you from even being tempted like the rest of the world.

He wants to give you that crown of life you’ve worked so hard to get. Doing the right thing is hard, especially when

EVERYONE else is doing something different...the wrong thing. God says it's OK...because those that have worked hard to be different, to be good, and that have struggled so hard to resist all those temptations to be bad, he has a special gift for you. It's not just special...it's awesome...it's not just awesome, it's so fantastic, words can't describe it!!! The Bible says:

⁹But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9) (KJV)

Words can not even describe what awesome things God has waiting for those who love him. Remember, loving God is not shown by what you say, but what you DO... So, when you're being tempted to do that wrong thing, remember that God has something GREAT waiting for those that turn away from doing wrong. When temptation is

trying to get the best of you, remember the REAL GIFT waiting for you and say to yourself....

“IT’S NOT IN THE PLAN! DOING WRONG JUST AIN’T WORTH IT!”