

2. Learning to Deal with Temptation

James wanted to help the Jews learn how to apply the law of liberty in their lives, so he mentioned the law of liberty in both the first and second chapters of the book of James. He also had a concern to help both the poor, and the rich, learn to apply the law of liberty in their lives. Today, we still have both the poor and the rich. We also want to help both groups in their spiritual growth. All Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, have to deal with temptation. Since we may have both physical and spiritual children in one or more of the groups mentioned above, we want to help them all learn how to have victory over temptation. That will be the focus of our topic today.

James 1:9-11 says, “Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.” The word “lowly” speaks of a person who is low in spirit or humble. In these verses, the lowly is contrasted with the rich, while in several passages, the lowly is contrasted with the proud. James 4:6 says, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” Then, in 1 Peter 5:5-6, it says, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” In these passages, we see that God is the One who gives grace to the humble and also exalts them in His time.

As physical and spiritual parents, we want to follow the example of Christ and model this lowly spirit by our example. In Matthew 11:28-30, we read, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” In these verses, we see that Christ gave us an example to follow as we show our children, by our example, what it means to be humble. Here, we see that a lowly brother is one who is focused on spiritual riches that will last for eternity rather than the physical riches of this earth.

That is very important to understand, in this context, because a common temptation for many people is the love of riches. In fact, 1 Timothy 6:8-10 says, “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here, we see that the love of money is one of the two negative roots given in the New Testament, because it is such a great temptation. The other negative root mentioned in the New Testament is a root of bitterness (Hebrews 12:15).

Many Christians have their focus on earthly riches rather than spiritual riches. Christ warned of the danger of this temptation many times. Matthew 6:24 concludes one passage that warns about the temptation of riches, when it says, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the

one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The word that is translated “mammon” means *treasure or riches*. As a result, it is important to understand that these verses are in the context of temptation and sin.

We see that earthly riches are compared to grass in a field during a time of burning heat. The heat quickly withers the grass, and the grass is gone. God says that the same thing will happen to a rich man who is depending on his riches. As a result, the poor man is to rejoice in his spiritual riches, and the rich man is to rejoice in the fact that the trials of life have brought him low and humbled him. Then, both can rejoice in what the Lord chooses to do through their lives. The Old Testament saints learned to walk by faith. Hebrews 11:16 says, “But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” In the same way, we also want to learn to walk by faith and look for that eternal reward.

That is why James 1:12 says, “Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” The word that is translated “temptation” in this verse is the same word that is translated “trials” in verse 2. James 1:2-3 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” The Lord allows trials or temptations in our lives for the purpose of helping us learn to count them as joy. We see that trials or temptations actually produce patience or endurance. Revelation 2:10 points out the fact that the crown of life is our reward for enduring trials. That verse says, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Since the Lord has promised the crown of life to all who love Him, these verses also remind us that all Christians will experience some form of trials.

That is why James 1:13 tells us, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” Here, we see a key distinction to make. God cannot be tempted by evil. God does not tempt any person to do evil. At the same time, we see that God does allow temptation. We need to understand this difference. Satan tries to place the things of the world in front of us with the hope that some of the things he places in front of us will cause us to be tempted. 1 John 2:15-17 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” Those things of the world that we love will tempt us. That is why the earlier verses warned about the danger of riches, because many people love worldly riches.

Satan does not know what will tempt a particular Christian, so, he places various things of the world in our path as a way to try and tempt us. The reason why that is true is given for us in James 1:14-15. Those verses say, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Here, we see that not even Satan can cause us to sin. He can only place things in our path that he thinks might tempt us.

We see that Satan tried to tempt Christ in three different ways. We see that, for Christ, each temptation was a test in which He showed that He did not desire the things of this world. Luke 4:3-4 says, “And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.””” Satan tried to tempt Christ with the lust of the flesh, but Christ quoted the Scripture and did not yield to temptation.

Luke 4:5-8 says, “Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.””” Satan tried to tempt Christ with the lust of the eyes, but Christ quoted the Scripture and did not yield to temptation.

Satan tried to tempt Christ with the pride of life, when he said, in Luke 4:9-12, “Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.”” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It has been said, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God.””” Christ, again, did not yield to temptation but defeated Satan by quoting Scripture. We want to help our children learn to defeat Satan with Scripture.

God will not tempt us, and Satan can only place things in our path in an effort to try to tempt us. However, the source of temptation actually comes from within ourselves. We are tempted when we are drawn away by our own lusts. In any area, where we have a lust for the things of the world, we are subject to temptation. Lust is a strong desire for anything forbidden. However, even that lust, in itself, is not sin. The last two words, in verse 14, say that in addition to lust, we also need to be enticed. The word that is translated “enticed” means *to catch by bait or to deceive*. When we deceive ourselves and say it will be all right this time, lust has conceived or given birth to sin. Sin may then become an action in which we carry out the desire to get the things for which we have a strong desire. The final consequence of sin is that it brings forth death. Paul describes this kind of death, for the Christian, when he says, in Romans 7:24, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The result is that Christians feel great guilt because their conscience has been renewed to convict them when they sin.

We want to show our physical and spiritual children how we can turn to the Scriptures and yield to the Spirit for victory over our worldly lusts. Each time we do this, the Lord will give us victory. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to have victory over worldly lusts.