

# Choices We Make



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Every temptation presents a choice—a choice to go in one of two directions—away from the Word or toward the Word. With today’s technology and just about everyone connected to someone or some kind of information, news, or images—temptations have increased exponentially. It is an *extraordinary* increase in *type* and *intensity*.

Satan will use every tool and every means to tempt people. Temptations are more serious; of greater diversity; and much easier to fall into than ever before—giving evidence that Satan is working overtime to ruin lives and destroy souls with new ways to spiritually harm the unsuspecting.

Satan can tempt anyone with anything—often with unscriptural *thoughts* and then condemn us for having *had* such thoughts. Being *tempted*, however, does not mean we have sinned—not yet; anyway! If we are tempted with any unscriptural desire, it *is*—at *that* point—just a temptation and *not* a sin—*unless* we yield to the temptation by being off our guard.

It is all about the choices we make. No one is *exempted* from temptation, but everyone has the *promise* of the ability to *resist*—if our choice is to ask God for help when being tempted. <sup>1</sup> *Corinthians 10:13* “*The temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempt-*

*ed, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.*”

We often keep *looking* at the tempting image—something we have *prayed* to be delivered from. If Eve had not kept looking at the fruit, the temptation would *not* have become *so strong*; and the results would *not* have been *so disastrous!* We know our weak areas, so we should not place ourselves in tempting situations.

The love for money has tempted people for thousands of years. <sup>1</sup> *Timothy 6:9-10* “*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*”

The choice we make is to move away from the tempting situation—otherwise, we allow ourselves to *be tempted* by staring at the tempting image—and we risk *yielding* to the temptation. That choice is *always* ours to make; but we *always* have the Holy Spirit to help us—if we *want* help. <sup>Matthew 6:13</sup> “*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*”—is our daily prayer.

The Christian life has always been a serious struggle against the devil—who tempts us in any way, or by any means, possible. Satan knows our weak areas better than we do, and he will exploit that type of temptation. <sup>Galatians 6:7</sup> “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*”

There are choices to make concerning what doctrine we accept. False doctrines would jeopardize our eternal life. *Once Saved Always Saved* is a delusion that has many people letting down their spiritual guard against temptation and sin. Satan presents an enticing religious message and multitudes accept it—thinking they

will always remain saved—even if they are not trusting God in faith for all issues of life.

Millions are misled to think they can never be out of God’s grace, no matter what sins they commit or wrong attitudes they retain. The truth is <sup>James 1:14</sup> “*every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*” If there is no true repentance; no forsaking of sin; and no returning to a position of trust on God, destruction of the soul would result.

King David had the Holy Spirit and was *in* God’s will, but later he yielded to temptation, committed adultery and took himself *out* of God’s will. He even plotted to have Uriah killed. King David would have gone straight to the lake of fire, had he not confessed and repented of those serious sins. It was his *choice* to turn back to God and be forgiven, or to rebel and be lost forever.

When we are tempted to take a course of action; think wrong thoughts; or retain a wrong attitude toward someone—that is being *tempted*; and when we follow through with any of them—that is *sin*. The Bible says “*all have sinned*” <sup>Romans 3:23</sup>, so sin must be *dealt* with by a true repentance and a recommitment to God’s Truth.

Sins do not have to be continuous to be sin—because telling one lie makes us a liar; stealing one item defines a thief; killing once is murder, and being greedy one time makes us an idolater. The fate of liars, murderers, and idolaters is <sup>Revelation 21:8</sup> “*the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*” We *must* <sup>Matthew 24:4</sup>, “*Take heed that no man deceive you.*”

<sup>Ephesians 5:5-6</sup> “*For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*”

Eve was tempted, and yielded, because she stayed near the tempting fruit; and everyone born since then has a nature prone to do the same. *Temptation* is not sin—until our choice is to yield to it. Being tempted is a sure thing, but 1 John 1:9 “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

God knows the fate of those who die in sin, so He is ready to *forgive*, if we will *confess* and *forsake* our sins. Repenting is *more* than being sorry—Judas betrayed Jesus, felt sorry, and even returned the money—but he did *not* repent and did *not* ask Jesus to forgive him. Instead Judas committed suicide and went to “*the fiery lake of burning sulfur*” Revelation 21:8 as an unrepentant murderer. Wrong choice—wrong destination!

Jesus warns us to take serious *action* against serious *temptations*. Matthew 5:30 “*If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*”

We are to get rid of anything that is *causing* us to sin—mindless Web surfing; phone scrolling; unscriptural entertainment; questionable books; alcohol; magazines; electronic devices; worldly friends; laid-up money, or anything that is *causing* us to have *wrong* desires.

The choices we make can take us toward eternal life. We are to take *drastic* action to remove the *source* of unscriptural images—Jesus said Matthew 5:30 “*it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*” Anything that is *tempting* us should be *removed* by us.

If a worldly friend tempts us to sin, we should end the friendship. If a magazine tempts us with immoral thoughts, we should shred it. If Web-surfing tempts us to view immoral images, we should cancel the online service. It is much

better to be *rid* of them, than to *keep* them—and to keep sinning. It is all too easy to *gain* the world and to *forfeit* our soul—Matthew 16:26.

Satan has custom-made temptations for people. He knows where we are weak and will *exploit* that area. Jesus warned about taking serious action against serious temptations. He told us to confess; repent; and forsake sins. Everyone is accountable, so everyone must take corrective measures—if spiritual growth is to result.

Being *tempted* is certain, but the *choices* we make, determines if we have sinned. Satan can present a temptation in a *second*—we *have* to resist in an *instant*. 1 Peter 5:8-9 “*Curb every passion, and be on the alert; Resist him, standing firm in the faith.*”

Being tempted can happen quickly and come from many sources today—smart phones; iPads; text messages; Facebook; Twitter; Instagram; radio; television; books, magazines, web sites, email, and a host of other forms of communication—a few taps on a screen can take us quickly into murky waters. Satan creates temptations to seduce the unaware.

We can be tempted to be very angry about something or toward someone, but being tempted is not a sin until we have resented and plotted a payback. We are *not* obligated Romans 8:12-13 “*to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*”

Old habits are tough to *break* and harder to *forsake*, but we *have* to because Galatians 2:20 “*the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” No one can forfeit their soul! We *cannot* allow *anything* or *anyone* to take us out of God’s will. Being with Jesus forever is our only objective. How *wonderful* Heaven is; and how *horrible* Hell is—we cannot imagine!

*Temptation* and *sin* are hard-wired to *desire* and *deception*. Satan first places a *desire* in our heart for something outside the will of God. Then he has us *justify* getting what we *desire*—*I’m not harming anyone*, he suggests. The desire can become so strong we are *deceived* about the consequences.

James 1:14-16 “*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. 16 Do not err [do not be deceived]; be not led astray], my beloved brethren.*”

The battle is for the mind—we *think* we *need* something. If the desire is unscriptural, the devil can *deceive* us, by convincing us to try it. If we lose the battle with *desire*, we are an easy prey to *deception*, which leads to *disobedience*—then to sin and eternal fire.

When tempted with anything, we must make the choice to ask for God’s help. The longer we delay, the more likely we will give in. Eve hesitated, kept looking—and failed. Joseph did *not* hesitate, because he *knew* it was wrong, so he *ran* from the house.

When we are tempted—to resent a wrong; mindlessly surf the Web; slander a reputation; hang with the wrong friends; “*lay up treasure*” on earth Luke 12:21, or to do anything against God’s will—we are being *tempted*, but we have not *sinned*—until we make a choice to yield! We are not obligated to sin by giving in—the power to resist is available to everyone—1 John 4:4 “*greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*”



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