

DEALING WITH TEMPTATION



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Beginning life with a sinful and rebellious heart compels us to start over again. Anything we want to accomplish, involves a learning curve, if the desired results are to be obtained. Any worthwhile knowledge or ability will involve some study to reach a higher level of competence. In like manner, temptations are met, so that spiritual learning will result. The most valuable information we will ever obtain is a thorough knowledge of the living God.

Mark 14:38 *"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."* Dealing with any temptation according to the Word of God, will refine our faith in the shed Blood of the Son of God. Hebrews 2:18 *"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."*

Since we begin life with no knowledge of God, and with no desire or ability to trust Him, it can take many lessons and tests before we begin to learn about our Creator—what His power will do, when we trust Him in faith to do them. These learning sessions can be called difficult trials, or serious temptations, but the result will be a test of our faith and trust on God.

The condition of knowing *nothing* about what God *will* do, has to be changed to knowing *much* about what God *wants* to do—in supplying, protecting, providing, healing, and guiding us—as we continue to trust Him in faith every day.

God's will is explained in God's Word, so we must decide that not one thing, not one person, and not any temptation will separate us from the Word. Romans 8:35 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"*

Whether a small temptation or a serious trial, we are to meet them according to the Word—which will increase our faith and trust in the Lord. Any temptation not met according to the Word of God, will hinder our knowing about God.

Jesus cannot really be King of our life, until the Word of God is the absolute guide of our life. If self is trusted; divine power is hindered. John 12:24 *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."*

This knowledge of God is not learned in a day, but anyone can enroll in His school, simply by a choice to learn from the various temptations and tests that come our way. It takes a real commitment to *know*, and a genuine desire to *learn* by obeying God's Word with all issues. If we are willing to go through temptations according to the Word, God supplies the ability to succeed through His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 10:13 *"No temptation has you in its power but such as is common to human nature; and God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. But, when the temptation comes, He will also provide the way of escape; so that you may be able to bear it."* We have to be willing to resist, before God can furnish the power. It is a choice that God's Word will be the only Word guiding our life.

Bible examples show how trials refine faith. Three Hebrews were commanded to bow to something man had constructed. That entire situation was set up by the devil to tempt them. It

was a valuable position to be in—spiritually. A true knowledge of God would result, if they met it according to the Word of God. Temptations are tests to see if we will place God's Word first. Every difficult situation or person, and every loss or gain that comes our way, is a test of our obedience to the Word.

Millions of professing Christians think that outward piety makes one righteous. They talk about Jesus, and verbally *praise the Lord* when going through a difficulty, but a person can talk like that and still be controlled by self. A true believer does not have to parade their faith in public. The Holy Spirit will shine through them, when *true holiness* comes from *true faith* on God in their heart.

Any outward show of piety, with no inward trust on God, is being a Pharisee. True faith in God is what dying to self is all about—it is the faith those Three Hebrews had. The living Word of God is a shining light on our path. These Hebrews believed God, so they obeyed His Word—even if it meant the death penalty.

They were told that if they did not obey the unscriptural government law, they would be sentenced to death by fire. It is of great spiritual value to meditate on this divine principle of truth. It shows a true position of believing faith that every child of God must come to, if they want *self to die* and *Christ to live* in their heart.

Real temptations and tests are recorded in the Bible—we often think ourselves 21st century martyrs. Hebrews 11:37-39 *"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."*

They lived up to the Word of God, and were trained by the power of God for greater blessings—which He has for anyone whose faith is real. Hebrews 11:40 *“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*

Bible examples help us deal with temptations. Hebrews 12:1 *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

Real temptations test real faith—proving whether our trust is truly on God or not. Hebrews 12:2 *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Three Hebrews kept their eyes on God, and they decided to obey His Word in faith, rather than follow the crowd in idolatry. That command of that king would definitely test their faith in God. Today, Satan inspires legislation in an attempt to dissolve the faith of believers. His object is to have them depend on worldly plans, rather than trust on the divine power of the living God.

Hebrews 12:3 *“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”* The situation has not changed since the time that law was passed. Jesus said Matthew 24:37 *“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”* He meant that people would be going about their lives, and many being tested in faith through trials, but most would not be trusting God.

The account is more detailed in another gospel. Luke 17:26-27 *“When the Son of Man returns, the world will be like the people were in Noah’s*

day. In those days before the flood, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came to destroy them all.”

28-29 *“And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.”*

Temptations are tests to see if we will swerve from God’s Word, and cave to the pressure of the world—whether it be a financial, medical, or protection issue that Satan inspired to be written and offered. Three Hebrews were under tremendous pressure from the command of a ruthless dictator. They had no count-appointed lawyer and no appeals to the Supreme Court. They would have to disobey God’s Word, or burn to death in a furnace.

Escaping that fate would cost no money—just follow the crowd. They did not have to contact an attorney, or hire the services of a legal defense group. All they needed to do to escape a horrible form of execution was to bend their backs in mock worship. They could easily walk away free and unharmed—but at the cost of denying their faith in God.

The teaching of the Bible is to eliminate the works of the flesh. Everything in the Christian life is to be done by the power of God. John 6:63 *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”* It is this way because 1 Corinthians 1:29 *“no flesh should glory in his presence.”* This dependence on the divine power of God concerns everything—our finances, our loved ones, our employment, our children, and everything else.

Many think *true religion* is looking *truly religious*—in appearance, but when physically op-

pressed, they take every pill or prescription medicine possible, rather than trust God in believing faith. It is not the praise on our lips, or the outward style of our clothes, but the inward attitude of our heart that counts.

Every temptation is a test to determine if the *self way* of the world is gone, and *the Spirit* of the living God has taken its place. Our reply to temptation has to be *their* reply. Daniel 3:16-18 *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”*

The gateway to God’s blessings is right there in that reply. Everyone who enters God’s kingdom will pass through this same gate of faith. Jesus said that many are called but few chosen Matthew 20:16. We must Matthew 7:13 *“Enter ye in at the strait gate,”* because the other one leads to death.

We would do well to face these temptations successfully while we have the opportunity to face them—it is the only way to 2 Peter 1:10-11 *“be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things [being tempted in faith, but keeping our trust on God], you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*



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