

Godly Living 4: Understanding Temptation

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to continue our study of how to live godly lives.
2. Studies like this are important because godliness is required of all who want real life (1 Tim. 4:8 – “for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”).
3. I want to talk about temptation because:
 - A. It stands as one of the major obstacles to godliness and our winning the war for our souls.
 - i. For, we are at war and temptation is one of Satan’s major weapons used to attack our souls and eternal wellbeing.
 - ii. And like it states in the ancient book **The Art of War**: “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.”
 - a. Victory requires understanding the enemy, how he thinks and works, his strengths and weaknesses.
 - b. Victory requires understanding yourself, how you think and work, as well as your strengths and weaknesses.
 - B. Despite much biblical warning and instruction, temptation is not always understood or met with the hatred and resistance it deserves in the lives of Christians.
4. Today we will examine temptation by considering the source of temptation and how it works that we might better understand it and face it with more confidence in the future.

BODY:

I. The source of temptation: A battle from without and within

- A. Temptation comes from *without* through the works of the evil one described as:
 1. The **devil** (Matt. 4:1 – “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the **devil**.”).
 - a. Since devil means **slanderer** or **false accuser**, we should know that anything offered by Satan can only be for our harm (1 Pet. 5:8 – “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”).
 - b. With such an evil intent, it is no wonder we are exhorted to be **sober in spirit** and be **on the alert** at all times concerning the devil’s assaults.
 2. The **tempter** (Mt. 4:2-3 – “And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And **the tempter** came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”).
 - a. Tempter refers to one who **tests with malicious intent to entice**.
 - b. Testing is not wrong, seeing God tested Abraham. But the tempter’s tests have evil intent.
 - c. We should know that temptation tests for weakness for the devil to exploit for our demise!
 3. **Satan**, as Jesus called him (Matt. 4:10), or **the adversary** of all that is of God and good.
 - a. Satan is the enemy, the opposition, the one who fights against us and our salvation.
 - b. Thus, whatever opportunity we give him, whatever weakness we expose, he will use it for our destruction (1 Cor. 7:5 – “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that **Satan will not tempt you** because of your lack of self-control.”).
- B. Temptation finds its strength from *within* (Jas. 1:13-15 – “Let no one say when **he is tempted**, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is **carried away and enticed by his own lust**. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”).
 1. We cannot blame God for temptation. It is not in God’s nature to tempt us to sin.
 2. It is our lusts that carry us away and lead us to sin.

- a. Being carried away is not a good thing. You do not want to be carried away by the current, by the enemy, or by your lusts.
- b. We can only blame ourselves for our sins (Matt. 15:18-19 – “But the things that proceed out of the mouth **come from the heart**, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ For **out of the heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.”).
- c. Therefore, it is vital that we take great care to control Satan’s power in our lives by controlling what we allow into our hearts (Mt. 6:22-23 – “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”).
 - i. You have a choice as to what enters your heart.
 - ii. If your “eye” is focused on darkness, you will be full of darkness and sin.

II. How temptation works

- A. We do not have to be blindsided by Satan’s attacks because Satan’s tactics were revealed in the garden of Eden (**Gen. 3:1-6** – “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”).
 - 1. Though we generally see this process beginning with a question, Satan actually began by appearing to be something different than what he is!
 - a. He came as something familiar, known, accepted, seeing Eve was not fearful of talking to the snake.
 - b. Part of Satan’s arsenal is that he does not give us a picture of who he really is! Instead, he appears as a friend, a co-worker, a TV show, an app, a little ad on the internet, etc.
 - 2. As a snake Satan asked a **question** concerning eating from any, or every, tree of the garden.
 - a. Satan was trying to create, or sow, doubt concerning God’s restrictions. For, thinking about what restricts offers opportunity to question God’s motives, goodness, etc.
 - i. Note that Satan’s question was designed to get Eve to ignore the multitude of blessings God had obviously provided.
 - ii. Instead, it focused on the one thing, the one restriction God had put in place in that garden.
 - iii. When we start thinking about the thing we cannot do and not the many things God has given us, we should know we are being attacked by Satan.
 - b. Because Satan is not God, he cannot know what is in your heart unless you reveal it.
 - i. Satan used the question to probe Eve’s mind in hopes it would reveal any weakness (bad feelings about God’s restriction, etc.) that he might exploit.
 - ii. We must be aware that Satan uses the information *we give Him*. If we allow lust to carry us and expose a willingness to give in to certain desires, be assured that Satan will attack us in that area.
 - iii. Therefore, how we deal with every encounter with temptation is important because, again, it determines how much power Satan has in our lives (James 4:7 – “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”).
 - 1) **We can never choose to give in and punt to the next temptation**, seeing it lowers our ability to resist and gives Satan more avenues and power to exploit us.
 - 2) **We must take care how we answer questions from those tempting us**. We must consider how to respond to friends, co-workers, etc., that ask us to do

wrong, making sure that our answers reveal God's power in your life! **Will you express your faith, or deflect, or blame it on something else?**

3. Satan followed his question with a **lie** (Gen. 3:4-5 – “The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! ⁵ For **God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened**, and you **will be like God**, knowing good and evil.”)
 - a. Lying, of course, is rooted in the devil's very nature (Jn. 8:44 – “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because **there is no truth in him**. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks **from his own nature**, for **he is a liar and the father of lies**.”).
 - i. So, rest assured that everything the devil presents in temptation, or ever, is a lie.
 - ii. Even the question was a lie because it was deceptive as to its malicious intent.
 - iii. Though eating the fruit would allow them to know good and evil, Satan lied in presenting it as though God's intention was to hold them back from a better life!
 - b. Ultimately, with the promise of *being like God with the knowledge of good and evil* came...
 - i. The **end** of being like God in holiness, in being without sin.
 - ii. The **end** of living forever like God (Gen. 3:22-24).
 - iii. The **end** of their joy found in fellowship with God, seeing that knowledge revealed only their sin, guilt, self-doubt, fear, and death!
 - c. Wisdom requires that we step back and examine temptation, seeking God's help and strength to expose the lies and resist.
 4. Step four was Satan sitting back to see if Eve's inward lusts would be allowed to do their work and she would give in (Gen. 3:6 – “When the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**, and that it was a **delight to the eyes**, and that the tree was **desirable to make one wise**, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”).
 - a. All Satan could do was set the stage and present lies.
 - i. At that point it was up to Eve shut Satan out or give her desires an audience.
 - ii. Sadly, she chose to listen to her desires which led to hers and Adam's sin.
 - b. Note that those inner lusts concerned how the fruit was good for **food** (lusts of flesh), a delight to the **eyes** (lusts of eyes), and desirable to make one **wise** (pride of life).
- B. Satan's tactics have not changed.
1. John warns us against the very things that tripped up Eve (1 John 2:15-17 – “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the boastful **pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”).
 2. These are the things that Satan entices from without and that we control from within. And we must be constantly alert concerning them if we hope to live godly lives.

CONCLUSION:

1. Temptation's power is somewhat controlled by us, by what we reveal in our response to Satan and by whether we give our lusts an audience within us.
2. We have every reason to win because...
 - A. We have the knowledge of Satan “so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Cor. 2:11).
 - B. God protects us so that godly living is always possible (1 Cor. 10:13 – “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”).
 - C. We have grace in Christ allowing us to rule over sin (Rom. 6:11-14 – “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your

body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”).

3. So, my brethren, stand strong in the Lord and win the battle for salvation and eternal life in Christ.
4. If you are not a Christian and desire to win the battle and receive eternal life, you must begin by *trusting* in Jesus as your savior and lord and R-C-BP-LF until the end in the hope of eternal life?