

Faith Without Works is Useless

An Expository “Journey” Through the Epistle of James

5-From Where Do Temptations Come? Part 2

March 21, 2021

James 1:12-16

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

13 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.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

To the Glory of God

Now *part* of the reason why Temptation often prevails against us is because of our simple and naive Assumptions about Temptation. Many people expect Temptation to march through the front door, dressed like a wolf, announcing itself loudly as it comes. But Temptation often prefers the back door; or the basement window- rising up through the crack between the floorboards. You see, the very nature of Temptation means that it relies on Subtlety and Nuance and Deception and Surprise- even Ignorance and Naivete.

And because that is true- if we desire to have Victory over Temptation- we have to start treating it the way the Bible treats Temptation- like a War! And you don't simply enter into a War. No, you FIGHT a War. And so, we must FIGHT Temptation.

You see, all through the Bible, there is language that has to do with Agriculture (**Genesis 27:28; Deuteronomy 28:8; Jeremiah 17:7&8; Matthew 13:3-9**); and Athletics (**The Acts 20:24; Galatians 2:2; 2Timothy 2:4&5**); and Family (**Psalms 127:3-5; 1Corinthians 11:3; Matthew 7:9**). But when it comes to Temptation and Sin- the language of the Bible- is the language of War.

Romans 7:22&23

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

1Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

We remember the story of Samson and Delilah (**Judges 16**) because she *overpowered* the strongest man alive. But how did she do that? How did Delilah subdue a man, who had just killed a thousand warriors with the jawbone of a donkey? (**Judges 15:15**) When we unravel the secrets of her Seduction- they teach us how to fight against whatever Temptation we face.

The first step in taking Temptation more seriously is to remember that Temptation always has a Mission. And that Mission has various facets:

- To ruin your soul
- To make shipwreck of your Faith
- To rob God of the Glory to which He alone is entitled
- To rob you of God

And that means that no Temptation is innocent or trivial. *All* Temptation schemes and plots for this one end: your never-ending Misery. So, Temptation will be happy to: *“Please you- to abuse you”*; *“Seduce you- to undo you”*; and *“Distract you- to destroy you.”*

Now Delilah may have been *more* motivated by money rather than hatred- but she was still every bit as determined to destroy Samson. The Philistines, his murderous enemies, had said to her,

Judges 16:5b

... “Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.”

These unsaved Gentiles were thirsty for Samson’s blood- and Delilah was all too willing to prepare the Slaughter. And this Old Testament Account is in the Bible to give us a natural Example of a spiritual Truth. The Philistines represent satan and the fallen angels we now call, “Demons”. And Delilah represents the carnal Temptations of our flesh. Samson represents believers as James describes us when Temptation strikes. James said we are:

... carried away and enticed by his own lust.

... and like the “Adulteress” of **Proverbs 5**, the “lips” of Temptation seem to be very sweet,

Proverbs 5:3

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey And smoother than oil is her speech;

... but look at what Solomon said was the end Result:

... But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life; Her ways are unstable, (Proverbs 5:4-6a)

... and that is *why* the wisest man in the world at that time said,

Now then, my sons, listen to me And do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her And do not go near the door of her house, (Proverbs 5:7&8)

Now God the Holy Spirit moved Solomon to use the Example here of a man being tempted- *sexually*- with an Adulteress. But the Result is the same with *any form* of Temptation:

Proverbs 5:9b-14

... you will give your vigor to others And your years to the cruel one; And strangers will be filled with your strength And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien; And you groan at your final end, When your flesh and your body are consumed; And you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! “I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to my instructors! “I was almost in utter ruin In the midst of the assembly and congregation.”

Now the word translated in verse 9 a “**vigor**” is a Hebrew word (*howd*; Strongs #1935), that means: *splendor; majesty; vigor; or human honor*. So, what Solomon was teaching here is that yielding to Temptation and sinning against the Lord- brings people into being foolish and ridiculous; and causes people to throw away their Dignity and Honor.

So, Temptation always means to bring us into Futility and Regret. And this is why Jesus said,

John 10:10a

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...

Now by using the word, “**only**” here- Jesus was making an “Exclusive Statement”. In other words, satan can **ONLY** do those three things. He has **NOT** been given the Ability to bless us; or to make our lives better; or to improve our condition- in any way. The Thief can’t do anything- **EXCEPT** steal; kill; or destroy.

And yet when Temptation comes- it **ALWAYS** tells us that by us yielding to what it offers- our lives will be better; we will be vastly improved; and we will be able to find Happiness and Joy that alludes us as a faithful bond-slave of Jesus. So, in that sense, Temptation is **NO** different today- with all of our technological, medical, and financial advantages- than it was back in the Garden with Eve.

Back then- God had given Adam His Will concerning what our first Parents could and could not do. And by giving them His Will- God *restricted* their Behavior.

Genesis 2:16&17

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

... and that is **ALWAYS** the case. All of God’s Commandments put *Limitations* on what we can and can’t *do*; what we can and can’t *believe*; and what we can and can’t *worship*; and what we can and can’t *love* and *enjoy*. And so, God’s Will; His Commandments- becomes the “Dividing Line” between the Lost and the Redeemed.

Now another way of understanding “God’s Will” or “God’s Commandments”- is to understand what *pleases* God; what *honors* God; what brings God- Glory. You see, everything that pleases God- **IS** His Will. Everything that brings God- Glory- **IS** what honors Him. Therefore, God **ONLY** Commands what will please and honor and glorify- *Himself*.

And there are two reasons why God does this:

1. So He alone will be glorified
2. So we will have the fullness of Joy

... and this is all driven by the “Love of God”. So, God’s Will; God’s Commandments; that which pleases God; and that which honors and glorifies God- is also called, the “Love of God”. And the Apostle John was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write,

1John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Now this is one of those very odd Statements that we find scattered all through the Bible. Notice very carefully what John said here. John said that the Love of God- God’s Love for us- is defined as: us keeping God’s Commandments. John said,

... this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments ...

But wait a minute! Isn’t me keeping God’s Commandments an example of MY love for God? Don’t I keep God’s Commandments because I love Him? Isn’t the only reason I strive to obey God’s Commandments at all- is because I love Him? So, how is my Obedience to God’s Commandments- an example of God loving me? On the surface this seems completely backward.

And the way to answer this is to first understand that God’s Love to us- is NOT best illustrated by God giving us the many things we desire or even need. God is NOT a Man. He doesn’t think or act or talk like we do. And so, God’s Love is NOT best understood as the Love that a Father has for his Son; or the Love that a Mother has for her child; or the love that a Soldier has for his Country. Now God giving us things IS a form of God’s Love- true. But the very BEST way the Love of God is manifested to us- is by God radically *changing* us (by what He alone does for us) so that we will WANT Him; so that we will LOVE Him; so that we will DELIGHT in Him and ENJOY Him!

And that is true- because God is BETTER than anything else in all the Universe. And so, the Gift of *Himself*- is the BEST thing God can give to us. And because God is Omniscient- God knows and understands that *better* than we do. But in our fallen State- we do NOT want God; we do NOT love God; we do NOT delight in God or enjoy Him.

You see, no lost person loves God. And lost people *don’t* love God- because they *can’t*. And lost people *can’t* love God- because they don’t *want* to. And because they don’t *want* to love and enjoy God- means that lost people are fully culpable for their lack of love for God. And

God has promised *horrific* Punishment for those who do not love Him; and for those, who do not find the fullness of their own Joy- in Him.

So, *loving* God; *delighting* in God; *wanting* God; *enjoying* God; being *happy* in God- ONLY happens when God sovereignly gives us new, spiritual Life- through the Miracle of the New Birth.

So, according to the infallible Word of the living God- God's Love toward us- is BEST illustrated in God changing us- so that our Joy is made full- when...

... we keep His Commandments

But what will *cause* that? What will facilitate me being at the zenith of my own Happiness when I am striving to obey God's Commandments? John gave us the insight into this, when he said this at the end of **1John 5:3**,

... and His commandments are not burdensome.

Now the word that was translated here as, "**burdensome**" comes from a Greek word (*barus*; Strongs #926), which means: *weighty; not trivial; important; and oppressive*.

Yet God's Commandments are burdensome to those who are lost. In fact, that is all they are. To the lost world- God's Commandments are NEVER seen as being the pathway to our Joy. So, this is a very radical Concept:

God loves me the most- when He changes me- so that I will delight to do His Will.

So, God is glorified the MOST- when we are *enjoying* Him the MOST. God is glorified the MOST when we are at our *happiest*- as He is being made much of. God is glorified the MOST when His Commandments are no longer *burdensome* to us; when they are no longer *grievous* to us; when we no longer *chafe* at what He has commanded.

But Sin stops that from happening. Sin robs God of our Joyful Obedience. Sin dishonors God by making Him look pathetic next to the many other Pleasures that Sin promises us. And Temptation is the pathway to our Sin. James said,

... when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

So, here, James uses the language of a Woman giving birth to illustrate the Process of going from Temptation to Death:

- Temptation gives the Lust we already have- the opportunity to manifest itself
- When we yield to Temptation- our Lust is conceived (it is given Life)
- When Lust is given Life- the child that is birthed- is Sin
- The final, ultimate End of Sin- is Death (both spiritual and natural)

So, Temptation is the presentation of Sin as being the Solution to our lack of Joy and Happiness. And this is why Temptation NEVER says, “*Come and partake- so you may burn in Hell forever!*” Nobody would be fooled by that- even though that is *exactly* the net Result. So, instead, Temptation says, “*Come and partake- so you may be your happiest!*”

And the unspoken assumption is that God is mean; and a kill-joy; and a barrier to our Happiness. Temptation says that all God wants us to do- is to praise *Him*- but there is nothing in it for us. So, Sin promises us Happiness- right now. But in order to attain to this promised Happiness- we must throw off the “shackles” of God’s Divine Restrictions and Limitations (His Commandments) and rebel against His Will and go ahead and do what He has told us NOT to do.

So, at the very foundation of Sin- is a profound *Dissatisfaction* with God. What God has *said*; what God has *forbidden*; what God has *commanded*; and (even more importantly) Who God *is*- is simply NOT enough. So, Temptation says, “*The ‘Way-Maker’ is NOT making a Way for you; the ‘Healer’ hasn’t healed; the ‘Provider’- hasn’t provided; and the great and glorious Owner and Creator of the Universe- simply isn’t great or glorious enough.*”

Because- to the Lost- by definition- things like “glorifying God”; or “obeying God”; or “keeping God’s Commandments” looks like a whole lot of hard work. To those who are NOT saved- “doing God’s Will” requires a lot of effort and will-power- precisely because they are seen as being joyless, hard Labor imposed on us by a cruel God. In fact, through the Centuries, these efforts are called, “Religious Duties”. And to those, who are yet in their sins- the Effort to obey God- absolutely DOES rob them of any Joy they may have. In fact, the Lost will enjoy anything EXCEPT keeping God’s Commandments.

The Lost chafe at these divinely imposed Restrictions. And this chafing leads to abject Rebellion. So, to the Lost- the Will of God; the Commandments- that which pleases the Lord- act as gasoline to the fire of our internal, fleshly Lusts. So, the “thing” that God has expressly *forbidden*- is the ONLY thing those who are Lost- crave to do. And the “thing” that God has *commanded*- is the very thing they despise. And this is true- with EVERYONE who has not experienced the Miracle of the New Birth.

But sinful Pleasures don't attract us because we desire Pleasure. No, God created us for Pleasure. God wants us to be happy more than we want to be happy. And so, God has promised us *infinite* Pleasure with Him. 1,000 years before Jesus was born, God the Holy Spirit moved on David to write **Psalm 16:11** that says,

... In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Sinful Pleasures attract us because we have not set our hearts on *superior* Pleasures. So, two things are promised to us when we are right with God:

1. Fullness of Joy
2. Pleasures Forever

... *Fullness* of Joy- NOT the shallow, temporary "smile" of Sin. Pleasures *forevermore*- NOT the short-lived thrills of Lust. What gives Temptation its Power- is NOT because it is invincible. It isn't. To *some degree* in the Past; and to *some degree* right now- we have ALREADY resisted Temptation. We have already proven to ourselves- to *some degree*- that, by the Grace of God; by the Power of the risen Christ; by the Power of the indwelling Spirit; and to the Glory of God- we CAN resist Temptation; and we CAN overcome it; and we CAN persevere through it.

We have already done it in the past- to some degree- and if God will be Good to us- we will do it again in the future. We won't do it perfectly- but we WILL resist Temptation's lure; we WILL reject its Promises; and we WILL walk away from it.

So, the Power of Temptation is the Lie that we buy into- that Sin is better than FULL Joy and FOREVER Pleasures. The Power that Temptation has over us rests on us being tired or bored with God- Who alone is the deepest and strongest Pleasure in the Universe.

But when it comes to battling Temptation- many of us assume that our Good Intentions are sufficient. We really want to overcome Temptation, but we've never considered that our Temptations are administered at the hands of a very skillful, ruthless Enemy- who is dedicated to our Destruction- who has had 6,000 years of Experience with human beings. And that means that our own Good Intentions are simply no match for the corruption of our Flesh- much less the cunning of our Enemy.

As the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 7**, as long as we live in a broken and fallen world; dominated by satan; in corruptible bodies- we're going to have

Temptations. And we're going to stumble- sometimes quite often. The greatest saints in Church History have despaired over their propensity toward Temptation- even in their dying days. For example, when he was in his eighties, John Newton confessed how discouraged he was with his lack of spiritual progress and how acute the Temptations of his Flesh still felt to him. And the great Puritan, John Bunyan lamented the Fear and Faithlessness he felt going into the last chapter of his life.

Yet the Bible does NOT teach us to throw our hands up and simply give in. If we know a little about satan's Tactics, then we can have much more Confidence when he does come near.

First of all- we must understand that satan is NOT invincible. Satan is mightier than we are. But he is certainly no match for God. One of the most insulting and humiliating Realities of the Bible is the indisputable Fact that satan is actually nothing more than a tool that God uses to prove or to make obvious two things:

1. Who is truly saved
2. Who is lost

The very first infallible Reference about satan said,

Genesis 3:1a

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made...

... and from this- we learn several Truths:

- God created satan¹
- Satan is NOT all-powerful but "**more crafty**" than any other "**beast of the field**"
- As part of God's Creation- satan is completely *subservient* to God
- As a fallen angel- satan CANNOT repent

This means that satan rarely starts out with obvious lies. Instead, he usually starts with a Question.

Genesis 3:1b

... "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

¹ God originally created the arch-angel Lucifer. When Lucifer was cast out of Heaven to the earth- he became satan or the devil

In other words, he asked Eve, “*Are you sure this is what God said?*” Now please notice that this Question is all about what God said. And that is ALWAYS the case. What God said is ALWAYS the main Issue. And that is true- with every Temptation. We must remember that, ultimately, satan is angry with God. He attacks us simply because he CAN’T attack God. So, what is at stake here is a lot bigger and more important than us. God’s Word; God’s Will; and God’s Integrity is what is at stake. We are simply the ground on which this Battle is fought.

But also please notice that the Question that satan asks is NOT designed to inform anybody about anything. It is NOT designed to illuminate or clarify or magnify what God has said. The Question is designed to put Doubt and Unbelief and Disbelief into the mind of the person being tempted.

And IF satan sees that we fumble around with an Answer (like Eve) then he goes to Step #2. So, when Eve said,

Genesis 3:2b&3

... From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 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.’”

... satan then raises the bar and goes from simply *challenging* what God has said to outright *contradicting* what God said, and he replies,

Genesis 3:4b

... “You surely will not die!

... and at this point- satan also puts forth a completely DIFFERENT Statement from what God has already said. In other words, satan then develops a false Religion and says,

Genesis 3:5

“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.”

Now there are several areas of Temptation in satan’s Statement here. Among them are:

- God is mean and doesn’t want the Best for you
- Why be underneath “God’s Rule” (Theonomous) when you can be “Self-ruled” (Autonomous)?

- If you buy into what I am saying- you can become a god

... and evidently it worked, because Moses then wrote,

Genesis 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.

Now this follows the Process that James gave us,

James 1:15

... when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

... and it also follows the Warning given by the Apostle John

1John 2:16

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.

Yet there is a big difference here with Eve than with us. Eve was created *directly* by God. And so, until Eve sinned- she did NOT have a fallen nature. We are born *after* the Fall and so we are conceived in our mothers' womb with a fallen nature that is hostile toward God. But this happened to Eve BEFORE she and Adam fell. And so, they weren't tainted with Original Sin and didn't have any internal Lusts that satan could capitalize on. So, we really don't know WHY Adam and Eve sinned. The Bible is silent about WHY and HOW they were tempted to sin. We simply know that they were.

But what happened to Eve DOES fulfill what the writer of **Hebrews** taught,

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

... so, Sin *deceives* us. And as it deceives us- it makes our hearts hard- so that we are not easily convicted.

Now from this we know that satan's "go-to tactic" in our lives is to break the hold that the Word of God has on us. So, he takes what God has declared- and he

first, casts doubt on it. Satan puts question marks in our lives where God has put periods.

And as we have seen, sometimes he'll move from *questioning* God's Truth to outright denying it. But many times, the Question itself is enough. We find ourselves with Adam and Eve: doubting. *Does God really have my best interests at heart?* The warmth of our Affection for God cools, and we are left longing for the Comforts that sinful indulgence supposedly will bring.

Now if satan's main Goal is to confuse us about what God has said or to outright doubt it- then it makes sense that the primary way we overcome Temptation is by intentional Meditation on God's Word. And that is true. But it may not be true in the way you think.

Now many people interpret the big point of Jesus's Temptation in **Matthew 4** like this: The way you overcome satan is by knowing more Scripture than he does. So, if satan throws a Temptation at us- we can simply ward it off by going, "*Oh no you don't! 1Peter 3:8!*" Bam! Then when satan comes back with another one, we say, "*Ah, but I know the genealogy between Eliud and Jehoiachin!*" And then satan says, "*Whoa, I can't touch that!*"

But as we discovered last week, Jesus' Temptation in **Matthew 4** has NOTHING to do with us. We are NOT tempted the way Jesus was tempted in that particular Account. *That* Temptation was between the "One and Only" of the Father and satan about His Deity. We are NOT anywhere near that. And Jesus' Temptation in that Passage also has NOTHING to do with what James teaches. We must remember that Jesus' Father was God- NOT Joseph. So, Jesus was NOT fallen. And that means that He was not tainted with "Original Sin". And so, Jesus didn't have any internal Lusts that satan could capitalize on either.

But here's another Problem with thinking that our Victory over Temptation lies merely in us memorizing Scripture. No matter how many years we've memorized Scripture- satan still knows more verses than we do. Satan was an arch-angel in Heaven. He was with God and since he was cast out into the earth- he has had at least 6,000 years of experience dealing with human beings. And that means that you and all your Bible Study alone are no match for him. And that is *why* you can't find a single verse in the Bible that teaches us to engage in "hand-to-hand" combat with the devil. One of the reasons why people in the modern church try to "bind the devil" or to "fight satan" is the Arrogance and Self-righteousness they have developed through their bad theology that has deceived them into thinking more highly about themselves than they should.

"Spiritual warfare"- as taught in the Bible- looks almost *nothing* like what is being taught today. Spiritual warfare is very clean and simple and can be summarized in one verse that James will teach us later on:

James 4:7

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

... and please notice that the *hard* part is the *first* part of this verse: “Submit to God”. That is the part that will take more time than anything else. And this is the part that needs our time in the Bible. So, we study the Bible- we memorize Scripture- NOT to defeat satan directly. No, we study and memorize what God said- so we may submit to God. And in submitting to God- we WILL resist the devil and he will flee from us.

So, rather than learning how to “bind the devil” the Bible teaches us to submit ourselves to God. And that is where we should concentrate our time and our effort and our study and our prayer and our fasting- by submitting ourselves to God. And by doing that- we will *automatically* be resisting the devil. And the Promise of Scripture is that he will flee from us.

Now God used Peter to teach us more about how we may overcome Temptation. And so, let’s look at what the old fisherman taught from **1Peter 5:8-10**:

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Now you will hear verse 8 and part of verse 9 quoted very frequently these days. But very few will quote the rest of verse 9 and almost nobody will quote verse 10 in relation to overcoming Temptation. But when we reverse the order and ask the Question:

Who among us would like to be perfected; confirmed; strengthened and established?

... and everybody raises their hands. So, THEN we should give the method that Peter taught to accomplish that:

But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

[And] After you have suffered for a little while...

But exactly HOW does us “knowing” that the “same experiences of Suffering” are being accomplished by our brothers and sisters around the world- HOW does THAT Knowledge help us to avoid Temptation? In other words, what is the Connection between us suffering for the Glory of God and us overcoming Temptation? Well, as we already studied, Peter taught an overriding Principle that has to do with ALL things pertaining to God- even our escape from Temptation:

1Peter 5:9b

GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

... because one of the most common ways that the Bible teaches that we become “strong in the Lord and in the Power of His Might” and able to resist Temptation is through our Suffering. Why is that?

1Peter 4:1b

... because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

Now as we went through **1Peter**- we discovered that the Apostle was NOT teaching “sinless Perfection” here- but that through our Suffering- we are changed. And as we change- we sin much less. Because one of the most common ways that satan tempts us to sin- is by us already being “neck deep” in Sin to begin with.

And so, I would suggest to you that this is *exactly* what James had in mind when he wrote verse 12:

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

... because the word, “**trial**” here is the very *same* word for “**tempted**” in verse 13. In fact, the KJV actually says,

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation...

So, James was talking here about the “Trial of our Faith” or us being tempted in verse 12- which is *why* he then went into *how* Temptation works in the rest of the Passage.

And so, *part* of overcoming Temptation is for us to pray. When teaching us how to pray- Jesus said this in **Matthew 6:13a**:

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil...

Now, again, this sounds very odd. Jesus told us to pray to God, “*Do not lead us into Temptation*”. So, are we supposed to understand that God is the One, Who leads us into Temptation? And therefore, we are to pray that He won’t do that?

Well, even though it sure looks that way- we know that isn’t true- because James said,

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.

So, God does not do the tempting- He does NOT put evil Desires in our hearts. How do we know that? Because God can have no evil Desires in *His* Heart. James said,

... God cannot be tempted by evil ...

... yet God DOES allow us to be brought into the presence of many Tests and Temptations.

Proverbs 20:24a

Man’s steps are ordained by the Lord...

In fact, *every* Step we take in this Life is a step into the presence of Temptation. There is NO moment of our lives here on earth that is not a moment of Temptation- a moment when Unbelief and Disobedience is not a distinct Possibility.

The Lord’s Prayer does not teach us to pray against that kind of sovereign guidance. What it teaches us to pray is that the Temptation does not take us “*in*”. “O God, don’t lead me into Temptation. Please deliver me from the Evil that is set before me.”

Today, like every day- you and I will stand before *innumerable* Temptations. That’s what this life is: Endless choices between Belief and Unbelief; between humble and joyful Obedience and hard-hearted Disobedience; and between fear and trusting that God is NOT a Liar. And so, we cry out to God, “*O mighty God, forbid that I would yield! Hold me back from stepping inside the Temptation!*”

Yet we must understand that we don’t battle satan mainly by what *we* determine to do- but by declaring what Jesus has already done for us. Jesus

overcame satan's lies when we couldn't. And so, we overcome satan by trusting in Jesus' Victory and asking His Spirit to overcome Temptation through us.

But Temptation also uses Shame. We fall into Sin and so, Temptation says to us, *"See, I told you you're not saved. If you are saved- why did you do that? You don't belong to God- you belong to me. So, come and serve me and I will make you happy."*

The Bible doesn't teach that satan accuses us every once and awhile. No, in **The Revelation 12:10b**, the Bible says,

... the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

... so, part of overcoming Temptation means that we must know how to answer the ongoing Accusations. And our Victory lies in the fact of what Jesus has done for us. And so, we respond:

- I am not who I once was (**2Corinthians 5:17**)
- I have been crucified with my King (**Galatians 2:20**)
- My Sin has been canceled (**Colossians 2:14**)
- My Sin no longer rules over me (**Romans 6:14**)
- In Jesus, there is now no Condemnation for me (**Romans 8:1**)
- God has given me all I need to resist Temptation (**2Peter 1:3; 1Corinthians 10:13**)
- Therefore, I will not be put to Shame (**Romans 10:11**)

What we must realize is that Temptation itself is not Sin. We know this because Eve was tempted BEFORE she fell and the writer of **Hebrews** said that Jesus was tempted, **"yet without sin"** (**Hebrews 4:15**).

Temptation is a disorienting, defiling Experience when Evil is presented to us as Good. Destruction comes dressed up to look like Happiness. And that means that Sin only occurs- when we believe that the destructive Lie can actually grant Happiness.

Satan knows (as the Apostle Paul wrote) that **"everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude"** (**1Timothy 4:4**). So, yes, the Bible says that. But that isn't all the Bible says. It goes on to say, that what made all the things God created- to be sanctified (holy) was **"the word of God and prayer"** (**1Timothy 4:5**) and it also says, that **"whatever is not from faith is sin"** (**Romans 14:23**).

So, to be tempted is not a Sin. To *yield* to Temptation is Sin. And that means that Temptations are never as strong as they appear. Their Power lies solely in the

false Hope they produce in us. Remember, it is Hope that is powerful. And God created us to “hope in Him” (**Psalm 43:5**).

In Temptation, satan is just trying to use our God-given Desire for hopeful Happiness against us. And so, if we only can identify his false Promise of Hope; declare the true Promise of Hope from God; and then expect to weather some disorienting emotional urges- the mirage that Temptation is- will dissipate- and our Hope in God’s promised Happiness will be strengthen and fulfilled. James said,

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

O God make it so!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

