

# Sermon: How to Overcome Temptation

Text: [I Corinthians 10:1-13 ESV](#)

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[I Corinthians 10:1-13 \(ESV\)](#) <sup>1</sup> For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. <sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

**Introduction:** Been tempted lately? Of course, you have! Temptation touches everybody’s life. From the minister to the Elders to everyone who calls themselves a Christian, no one is exempt. Jesus was tempted - not by God - but by the devil.

A biblical principle everyone must learn is: God does not tempt us. He tests us - not to ruin us, not to damn us, not to have us lose our salvation - but to make us a stronger witness for Him.

[James 1:13-15 ESV](#) <sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

It is interesting to note that it is God who led the people of Israel (**Deut. 8:2**) out into the wilderness to be tested. It is the same Spirit that led Jesus out into a wilderness to be tested. Jesus led his disciples out on a lake to see what they would do when their lives were threatened. The same God tests His Church today to see what kind of a people we will be - whether we will walk by faith or by sight, and whether we will obey.

The Devil has a different agenda. He tempts us so as to try to cause us to fall, to deny our relationship with the Father, to cheapen our commitment so the Devil might have more company in HELL.

God wants what is best for His children and family. Satan wants what will separate us from God eternally. God tests for good reasons; the Devil tempts for evil and destructive ones.

I am tempted to quit, to be critical, to win at all costs in every area. But that is not God - that's Gary or someone worse.

**Hebrews 2:14-18 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Note: It was not easy - even for Jesus. - Jesus certainly was tempted at other times than what we hear about in the NT. And there is a difference between temptation and testing. Testing is unavoidable. Temptation can be overcome. In all of this:

## **I. God Is on Our Side (we are not alone).**

### **A. Jesus will be with us always.**

Sometimes we feel as if we are the only ones. Isolation, loneliness becomes the backdrop and environment for temptation and for some to sin and doubt.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his book entitled *Temptation*: “From henceforth we (Christians) shall no longer be led into temptation (the Good Shepherd), but every temptation which happens now is the temptation of Jesus Christ in his members, in his congregation. We are not tempted. Jesus Christ is tempted in us.”

**Illus.** I have heard people say I do not want my child baptized until they get through their teenage years. But you see the major problem with that is: if they want to follow Jesus, do you want them going through that intense time with or without the Holy Spirit walking with them?

### B. Jesus understands temptation.

**Hebrews 4:15-16 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus understands what temptation is like. In **Genesis 3** we quickly learn that the Tempter comes to us in disguise (even as an angel of light). Before the serpent is cursed he does not crawl on the ground, there are no rattles to warn of deadly venom. Many times there is nothing to alarm us at all, until it is too late.

The Devil is disguised in his person and purposes. Satan does not use the direct approach. He doesn't come knocking on the door of your soul and say, “Pardon me, if you could give me just a half an hour. I'm here to see you damned. May I come in?”

Satan will shift focus. There is that one thing you want so desperately you'll do anything to get it. You forget about God. Sin becomes trivialized. Satan says, God would have you die for that? Surely not. Would God really condemn you for that? Other people do worse. What about grace and forgiveness?

Once Satan attacks God's Word, this puts into question God's character. The Word is who God is so says the apostle John. At some point then, God's goodness and love are put into question.

One thing we must never forget or lose sight of, is: God cares for us - loves us and wants us with Him. His heart breaks when we disobey. We drive a dagger into His heart when we question His forgiveness and separate ourselves from His grace.

## II. God Provides Tools (a way through).

There is always a choice to make. In temptation, many times it is a choice between the kind of tools or weapons we will use. Here are a few choices that are common in temptation:

1. My desire - God's will
2. Instant Gratification - eternal pleasure (Esau gave up his birthright)

**Hebrews 11:25 (ESV)** - speaking of Moses <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Throughout the Bible, a person's life is referred to as a vapor that quickly disappears, or grass that easily withers. We need a long view of every situation. How will this impact me, my family, my church, my LORD? It is what is seen that is temporary. It is what is unseen that is eternal.

We need a fresh look into:

### A. God's Word

Jesus gives us a positive example in the wilderness where He was tempted. Every response to Satan was found in Scripture. When we remember the Word, temptation loses most of its power over us. It also provides an historical warning as in **I Corinthians 10:**

Bodies scattered in the desert

Sexual immorality resulted in 23,000 deaths

Testing of God - killed by snakes

Grumbling people were killed by the destroying angel

**I Corinthians 10:6, 11 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Sometimes just like children we do not take God at His Word. We think we know better than our Heavenly Father. It really all boils down to trust. It is the awareness that the purpose and promises of God go beyond the momentary pleasures of desire. John tells us: **I John 2:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

We need a fresh look into:

**B. God's Heart**

Jesus' heart was broken over Jerusalem and it is most certainly broken over America and the current world. Paganism continues to move west from where the church began. We need to have a passion for the lost and hurting. We need to be willing to sacrifice everything for the redemption of the world. (our redemption)

**III. God Provides an Escape (a way out).**

Satan does not cause anyone to fall. He simply sets up the possibility. He uses people (of all kinds) to accomplish his sinister purposes by having them tempt us, or awaken a sinful idea in our minds. BUT God has provided a way out.

**I Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

**Key principle:** “God is faithful even when we are not, but God will NOT put up with *willful* sin.”

(My **I Corinthian notes**) - There is a limit to what God will allow us to be tempted, and for each of us that may be different. God knows our capabilities in spiritual warfare.

The word (πειρασμος) translated “temptation” carries the idea of trying or testing. “It came to signify the trying intentionally, and with the purpose of discovering what of good and evil, or power or weakness, was a person or thing.” (Trench, Synonyms, 280) , Rienecker, pp. 419-420

“a way out” (NIV) or a “way of escape” (ESV) comes from a Greek word (εκβασις) which Leon Morris comments (p. 142) “The imagery is that of an army trapped in rugged country, which manages to escape from an impossible situation through a mountain pass. The assurance of this verse is a permanent comfort and strength to believers.” Yet, one must still choose God's way out.

This way of escape could include:

**A. A Brother or Sister in Christ**

Over the years it has been the encouragement of brothers and sisters in the Church and the support offered in love that has made it possible for many of us to escape temptation. Even the temptation to quit. Mention Bob Russell Ministries (2007) and “prayer partners.”

### **B. God’s Holy Spirit**

To help us pray - We do not always know what or even how to pray. Sometimes we avoid praying or do not make time. But this heart talk helps keep us alert (sensitive) - to the spiritual conflict that is all around us

(Bonhoeffer, *Temptation*, p.34) “There is only one stronger reality to be set against the exclusive reality of desire and of Satan: the image and the presence of the crucified.”

**Illus.** The only real car accident that I have been responsible for was the result of carelessness - not paying attention to the dangers. - explain.

I could have killed someone, and I wasn’t alert to the danger all around.

Jesus tells his disciples to both watch and pray so as not to fall into temptation.  
([Matthew 26:41](#))

If you beat the devil, he’ll be back. He left Jesus after the temptations in the wilderness, but Scripture says that it was just for a season, and the Devil would return. As Paul makes clear: no one should get an attitude about how spiritual he or she is. Pride comes before the fall. He says in our text:

[I Corinthians 10:12 \(ESV\)](#) <sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

**A definition of temptation:** One three-year-old’s explanation for being in the kitchen atop a chair eating cookies: “I just climbed up to smell them, and my tooth got caught.”

Where there is humor in that, there is nothing funny about sin and death as a result of falling into temptation. The church prays: “Lord, lead us not into temptation”...the kind that will eternally separate us from You.

**Conclusion:** It is very clear from Scripture that temptation/testing cannot be avoided. Temptation is a reality for everyone because we are free to choose. Temptation is not sin. Jesus was tempted, but never sinned. It is also clear that God will help us through the darkest times and we are never alone *unless* we choose to be.

The responsibility of the Body of Christ, the Church, is:

- to carry each others' burdens
- to restore gently those who have fallen into sin

This is an easy world where we can get lost, so many tempting things, BUT there is only:

- One who satisfies
- One who saves
- One who forgives

and that is God, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Sometimes the temptation is to delay making a decision. Don't do it. Today could be the day God begins to use you in a mighty way.

Lord, hear our prayer:

- Protect our witness in the world.
- Protect us in our daily lives
- Protect our children/families, and all those we love.

And for those we don't love as we should, **CHANGE OUR HEARTS!**

Lead us **NOT** into temptation; deliver us from the Evil One. **AMEN**

This illustration is for free, about the long view of things and on the importance of investing in eternal commodities: In 1965 47-year-old Francois Raffray made a deal with then 90-year-old Jeanne Calment. He agreed to pay her \$500 a month for the rest of her life in exchange for her condo when she died. He paid her that sum for the next 30 years until he died at age 77 in 1995. In all Francois paid more than three times the market value for the condo. She died two years later at age 122, the longest living person in modern history.

- Source: Wikipedia & *The International Herald Tribune*