

**Faithwalkers Milwaukee – Saturday, September 22, 2018**

**How to Handle Temptation**

**H. van Oudenaren**

**Passage: James 1:13-18**

**Key Verse: James 1:14**

**“But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.”**

“How to handle temptation” is this week’s title and topic...and wouldn’t we be sitting on a goldmine if we had that formula!

From our original ancestors Adam and Eve, right down the line to us in this present age, temptation, and more importantly, giving into it has been at the root of all our evils in this world.

So Greg and the FW Leadership team thought they would give me 25 minutes this morning to reveal to you the magic cure that has eluded every human (save Jesus) for the past several thousand years 😊

I feel quite up to the task having extensive experience with the topic...of being tempted and giving into it, that is....so their trust in me shall not go unwarranted.

I often let my kids know what I will be speaking on so that they might offer any insights, and this time I was blessed to find out that my daughter-in-law Stephanie’s ladies Bible study group in Houston are doing James at the same time as we are....so she sent along some excellent materials that I will share with you as we go through this.

Here is how I propose to cover the material in the short time we have, so hold on to your hats:

- 1. What is temptation?**
- 2. Why are we tempted? Is it bad, why or why not?**
- 3. How to handle temptation....and not give in to it**

Pens, pencils or tape recorders ready? Let’s begin.

**1. What is temptation?**

Oxford – the desire to do something

Websters – an [allurement](#), [bait](#), [come-on](#), [enticement](#), seduction, [lure](#), [turn-on](#), to be drawn in

Wikipedia - Temptation is a desire to engage in short-term urges for enjoyment that threatens long-term goals;

- an immediate, pleasurable urge and/or impulse that disrupts;
- the state of being attracted and enticed;

Apparently the Greek for *temptation* and *tempted* can also mean *testing* and *tested* so let's keep those words in mind....a temptation is a test or a trial.

When I was sharing what I would be speaking on this morning with the guys in prison last night, I asked if they could help define the difference between a temptation and a test, and here was their consensus...

A **temptation** is a potentially destructive experience often brought on by the Tempter (Satan).

A **test or trial** is a potentially beneficial experience either caused or allowed by our Lord.

An interesting and insightful delineation, wouldn't you agree!

## **2. Why are we tempted? Is it bad, why or why not?**

**James 1:2-4 and 12** "Consider it **pure joy**, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face **trials** of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.....**12** Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him

**Resisting temptation produces perseverance and maturity and completeness in us which leads to receiving the crown of life from our Lord.**

**Romans 5:3-5** "we also **glory** in our **sufferings**, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5**And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

**Resisting temptation produces perseverance, character and hope.**

And last but not least, here is a verse that I've struggled with many times in terms of its promise and application....

**I Corinthians 10:13** "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But **when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**"

Perhaps I've been interpreting it incorrectly....I've always thought that it means God will provide a way for me to resist temptation, but if you read it closely, you'll see that it says **He will provide a way out so I can endure or escape it.**

Perhaps resisting temptation is not the only way we learn the important lessons God has for us....perhaps those tests and trials that we cannot resist also teach us even more important lessons....

Think this is heresy? Have a listen to the important point this teacher brings forward...

***From Diego Cuartas – Living Faith Alliance Church, Vineland, NJ***

“God promises to provide you with the way to escape or the grace to be able to bear patiently what you are facing. And somewhere in between, as John Calvin believed, God “sets limits to the temptation” (Calvin's Commentary on the Bible, studylight.org). What is happening here is that the emphasis is on God's grace made available to you, not how much you are able to bear.

Friend, at times you will, like Paul, celebrate the fact that you have been rescued from difficult times or given the way out to escape as it was reported in **2 Timothy 3:10-11** “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them”. At other times, like in the case of slaves who believed in Christ, the Apostle Peter would encourage them and commend them because they were bearing up “under the pain of unjust suffering because they [were] conscious of God” (**1 Peter 2:19**).

**The point is whether you are being rescued or given the help to endure, God will be faithful to you in your situation.”**

Now, if like me, you are a deep thinker on these things, and extrapolate them to their full extent, you may often wonder why our omnipotent, omniscient, holy God would even allow sin and evil in His perfect design....well, we certainly don't have time to delve into that infinitely deep topic, but I can refer you to **RC Sproule's** talk (from Steph) entitled “**Providence and Evil**”, where he tries to reconcile this most difficult of dilemmas....I'll include a copy of it in the talk we post to the FW website for today for you to go through at your leisure...

**“How can we reconcile the existence of evil with our belief in a good and sovereign God?”**

Undoubtedly, the problem of evil is the most enduring attack leveled against Christianity. Skeptics say an all-powerful God cannot also be good since He does not stop the wicked. Moreover, they contend, if God is good, He cannot be omnipotent because a good deity would never allow evil if He had the ability to stop it. This is a difficult issue, and we will not be able to understand it fully before Christ's return. However, Scripture does give some guidance on this subject.

Any biblical answer to this question begins first with the recognition that the Lord certainly does ordain evil acts. While Scripture tells us the Creator is perfectly good and never does evil Himself ([James 1:13](#)), many passages indicate that God uses wickedness (for example, [1 Kings 22:23](#); [Ps. 105:23–25](#)). Nor can we deny the Almighty's omnipotence. God could stop evil in every case if He so desired ([Gen. 18:14a](#); [Mark 10:27](#)). For reasons not always evident to us, the Lord sometimes determines it better to allow sin than to stand in its way. Sometimes He deems it good to permit evil.

God ordains evil without being liable for it. Yet evil in itself is not the Lord's ultimate purpose. Rather, God ordains evil in order to further His ultimate, good plan. Evil acts themselves are always evil, but His plan and goal are praiseworthy. Somehow the Lord permits deeds that He hates because this wickedness finally contributes to our good and His glory ([Rom. 8:28](#); [James 1:2–4](#)).

God's ordination of wickedness for a good end is clearest in His use of the evil motives of the Jewish and Roman authorities to crucify Jesus and fulfill His good plan for His people ([Acts 2:23](#)). The Lord's use of our intentions and deeds, good or evil, in order to fulfill His ultimate, laudable ends is known as the doctrine of concurrence.

Those who would use the problem of evil to deny the existence of God have a problem. As many theologians and philosophers have taught, evil is a negative idea, a parasite on the good. Without a previously existing, eternal, and personal good (God), nothing could be defined as evil. As you consider the mysteries of providence and evil, remember that the Lord is far greater than we can imagine ([Job 42](#)) and will use wickedness to create a glorious future for His people”

### **3. How to handle temptation....and not give in to it**

I thought I might start this section by outlining a few of the excuses that we use when we give in to temptation and have tried to sort them in order of frequency used (from personal experience). I'll then follow each with practical and proven ways to overcome these excuses.

Since this will be part of your table questions and discussion after I depart, I suggest you jot a few down....but please, please, please, have someone at your table make note of the ones each of you come up with and email them to me since I would very

much like to benefit from your extensive experiences....remember, we are here to edify and encourage one another as the days grow shorter!

**1. I've given in to this temptation before (repeatedly) and I've not suffered, so God must not consider it that serious!**

Well if you believe that, here are a couple of the most serious warnings from Scripture that I can try and convict you with....

**2 Timothy 3:1-8** "There will be terrible times in the last days. **2**People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3**without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, **4**treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **5**having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

**6**They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, **7**always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. **8**Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. **They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.**

**Romans 1:18-32** "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **19**since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that **people are without excuse.**

**21**For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22**Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools**23**and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

**24**Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25**They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

**26**Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. **27**In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

**28** Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. **29** They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; **31** they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. **32** Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

3 times it says "God gave them over...". God is patient, and merciful, and faithful...but Scripture also teaches us that God has His limits. **If we continue in our sin, God will give us over to it...**

He warns in **Matthew 24:10-13** "**10**At that time **many will turn or fall away from the faith** and will betray and hate each other, **11**and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. **12**Because of the increase of wickedness, **the love of most will grow cold**, **13**but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

- 2. The Lord's Prayer....why would Jesus teach us to say "lead me not into temptation" (Mat 6:13, Luke 11:4)....if God didn't want me to be tempted, He wouldn't lead me there.**

Even Adam blamed God for his original temptation...Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. But notice that, in blaming Eve, Adam stressed that it was God who had given her to him (Gen. 3:12).

From **Opening Up James by Roger Ellsworth** (from Steph) italicized phrases are mine)....

"The answer, of course, is that here the word 'temptation' does not mean temptation to sin. It rather refers to trials. It is a fact that the Lord does regularly send trials to his people so they may know their spiritual condition (*in the same way the 10 Commandments are intended to serve us*). Asking God not to lead us into temptation means, then, that we ask him not to test us because we are already aware of how very weak we are."

- 3. Persecution/trials – often when we are in the midst of trials, our faith is at its weakest, we feel sorry for ourselves because others are persecuting us so surely God, who causes or allows my trials, will allow/overlook/permit me to sin a little to "make me feel better"**

Just refer to the warning verses offered above under #1

4. **Even the much more Spiritual apostle Paul was tempted and gave in, so why wouldn't I?**

**Romans 7:15-20**

<sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.<sup>[a]</sup> For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Thank God that we have believers in Scripture like Paul that were open and honest enough to reveal their true thoughts and frustrations. Having said that, Paul never gave in and offered us many guidances that he used to continue the fight and never give us...indeed, he finishes **Romans 7** with the following...

“<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

5. ????

**And to wrap it all up, what do we do when we do give in to temptation....**

**Run to the Father and confess your sins.....**

**1 John 9** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

...and like the apostle Paul, “**rejoice in your trials**”...

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10** “And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.<sup>10</sup> Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; **for when I am weak, then I am strong.**”

From “**Opening Up James**” by **Roger Ellsworth** (from Steph)

“God cannot tempt anyone to sin because he cannot! His very nature is so opposed to sin that he cannot possibly tempt anyone in that direction. D. Edmond Hiebert writes, ‘God is unsusceptible to evil; evil has never had any appeal for Him. It is repugnant and abhorrent to Him.’”

“If God cannot tempt us to evil, how is it that we sin? James answers, ‘... each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed’ (v. 14). He leaves no

doubt about it. We are individually responsible for sin. **We sin because we are sinners.**

“If you even now find yourself tired of the grip of sin and longing for new life, **it is indisputable evidence that God is working in you.**

So flee to him! Thank him for the evidences of his working and plead with him to work more! Ask him to make your sin very real to you, and ask him to make his salvation even more real to you.”

### **So how do we overcome temptation and recurring sin?**

“how does God channel his saving grace to us? **James** has the answer. He says it is ‘by the word of truth’ (v. 18). It is through the preaching of the Word of God that our minds are enlightened. The Word of God shows us our sinful condition and the wrath to come.”

“The apostle Paul refers to the Word of God as ‘the sword of the Spirit’ (Eph. 6:17). It is the instrument that the Spirit of God uses in bringing us to spiritual life. **The source of salvation is the grace of God. The channel is the Word of God. And the outcome is ‘that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures’ (v. 18).**”

And now I leave you with words that I pray the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind at the appropriate time over the next few days as you deal with whatever temptations the world brings your way, and whatever trials our Lord will cause or allow you to experience...

### **Victory in Jesus**

“I heard an old, old story,  
How a Saviour came from glory,  
How He gave His life on Calvary  
To save a wretch like me;  
I heard about His groaning,  
Of His precious blood's atoning,  
Then I repented of my sins  
And won the victory.

#### *Chorus*

O victory in Jesus,  
My Saviour, forever.  
He sought me and bought me  
With His redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew Him  
And all my love is due Him,

He plunged me to victory,  
Beneath the cleansing flood. “

Amen, amen and amen!

### Table Questions

- 1. What temptations do you struggle with? Have your brothers at the table help identify what steps you can take to ward off these temptations the next time they occur (since “iron sharpens iron” and we need to help each other to stay faithful).**
- 2. What can we do to increase our awareness of the enormity of our sin?**
- 3. What difficulties or trials has God caused or allowed in your life that may be His attempts to help you overcome your temptation?**

### James 1:13-18

**13** When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

**16** Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.