

Guarding against Temptation

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Consider the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 1:13-16, grace is brought unto us “at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” through the living Word of God. Therefore, we do not follow our former lust patterns as disobedient children through ignorance, because He who has called us is holy. Furthermore, God said, “it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

What are we going to do? Well aware of the temptations we face every day, we know how far short we fall of the standard of perfect righteousness: Our Savior became a man and was tempted in all points, “like as we are, *yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). *What are we going to do?*

His eyes are so pure, He cannot behold evil; He is *that* holy (Habakkuk 1:13). He loves righteousness (Psalm 45:7), and inasmuch as He knew no sin, so our sin separated Him from us.

Since we all have an old sin nature (1 John 1:8), how will we make it? In this booklet, we

will learn that for every temptation, God has a provision. And His desire is to show us the way of escape.

Chapter One

VOLUNTARY FAITH VS. INVOLUNTARY DEMISE

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:13-15).

Anything we truly receive from God comes through voluntary decisions in how we think and what we choose. In other words, when we receive from God, we must volunteer to mix faith with what we hear; we must volunteer our hearts to be God-conscious.

Undone by the Unseen

The other side of it is this: Whatever I receive from Satan is *involuntary*. In other words, when

Satan sends projections, unless we are guarding our hearts (Proverbs 4:23), he is able to get into our unconscious minds, whether we are aware of letting him in or not.

This is such an important principle to learn. Picture a frozen lake. The visible surface layer of ice equals the conscious mind. But what goes into the subconscious and unconscious mind is like the water beneath the surface of the ice. It cannot be seen when ice covers the top, yet the unconscious mind and the subconscious mind are continually receiving information.

That is why we can be so easily influenced by wrongdoing when we are around certain groups of people. The unconscious mind involuntarily receives messages that the activity—whatever it is—is good. It may be a room full of people drinking alcohol. Everyone is smiling, and they appear to be having fun; however, their thought processes are impaired and they are unable to make proper judgments. Much worse than drinking is the attitude that goes with it.

The thoughts that go into your unconscious mind begin to develop and enter into the subconscious mind where there is some understanding, some desire, some relationship to the

truth. But because the information needed for proper reasoning is still below the conscious level, you cannot understand the cause—nor see the end result—of your behavior. If God is involved and the conscious mind is not deceived by the unconscious mind, God can reveal the root cause and effect of behavior that is potentially destructive.

In Psalm 42:7, the Bible says that the deep calls unto the deep. And when I voluntarily choose to hunger and thirst after God (Matthew 5:6), the Word of God enters into my heart, which is now guarded—protected by walls of doctrine. Then, as I think, so am I (Proverbs 23:7a).

But if my heart is not guarded, I automatically give a place to Satan (Ephesians 4:27), who goes to work without my volunteering to cooperate with him. If he gets into my unconscious mind, then I have no idea what I'm doing, neither in my subconscious nor in my conscious mind.

In recent days with the increase of violence, public schools have once again recognized the importance of setting standards for behavior to enforce moral restraint. There are cases where many of their standards are higher than some private Christian schools, which have often been criticized for being too rigid. But the principle

remains true: Right behavior comes from right thinking, which must first be taught and then voluntarily applied (Proverbs 1).

Steps in the Path of the Tempter

The Bible says in James 1:13, let no man say when he is tempted, that God is tempting him; God cannot be tempted with evil, and He tempts no man. No, God doesn't do the tempting. But according to Matthew 4:3 and 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Satan is *the* tempter.

A man is tempted when, first, he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. When that lust has conceived, it brings forth sin. When the sin is finished, it brings forth spiritual death. So, the passage concludes, "Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:16).

A person doesn't suddenly enter into spiritual death. There are steps involved. Every Christian is admonished to hide the Word in his heart to keep from sinning (Psalm 119:11). That includes personal Bible study as well as hearing from his pastor-teacher as often as possible. Likewise, the purpose of Christian education is to help young people deal with the things in their lives that could lead down the wrong paths.

Many of us as parents, teachers, and friends

want to help. Many labor sacrificially to provide young people with the right environment so they will not be drawn away by their lusts and enticed; so that lust will not conceive and bring forth sin. Our desire is to help so that sin, when it is finished, doesn't bring forth spiritual death. But if it does, we will be there to love them with God's love.

Before a person is tempted to sin, he is first drawn away by his own lust. The disciples said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (see Acts 4:20). In John 16:13, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." Of course, they were referring to godly things. But if you take that principle and apply it to fallen men in the realm of Satan, what we see and what we hear, we will speak. If we give our eyes and ears to things that are not of God, even if they are "good" things, we are making a place for sin.

Recently a drunk driver almost killed two of our teenagers. Now, at some point a long time ago, he was tempted to drink. He didn't plan to get drunk and then drive, but it happened. The temptation to drink eventually led to drinking a little, drinking more, and finally getting drunk.

Then, because his thought processes were impaired and he could no longer make proper judgments, it led to driving drunk. If that man was a Christian, he was definitely in spiritual death, and he nearly caused physical death.

For those who think “a little bit of sin” is harmless, they have already been seduced by the devil. But our God is mighty, and He will use every opportunity to draw men to Himself. That is why Jesus was called the friend of sinners.

Chapter Two

LEAD US NOT INTO
TEMPTATION

God wants to teach us that we can avoid temptation. In Matthew 6:13, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” He was saying, “I want you to stay out of temptation. Just stay out of it. ‘Lead us not into temptation’—Pray that way, and you will stay out of temptation.”

Then in Matthew 26:41a, He said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” That tells me that if I watch and I pray, then I won’t enter into temptation. Watching goes together with praying, and praying goes with keeping a watch. There may be trends in your life, and if you watch and pray, you will be available to hear what the Father has to say through the Holy Spirit.

Don't Be Duped

The world today is filled with every form of perversion—from internet pornographers to molesters to exhibitionists. All of these sick people have allowed temptation in their lives. First they were drawn away unto lust and enticed, and then they *let* Satan come in.

Some people rationalize that looking at pornography and limiting their activity to mental fantasies means they are not hurting anyone else and that no one will ever know. Sooner or later, however, lust conceives. And then, when lust conceives, it brings forth sin. And the end of sin is spiritual death. Those people are in bondage to a power in the unconscious that produces a subconscious reflection, which then brings in a conscious sinful action.

This is so vital for every believer to grasp: If I do not guard my heart, Satan will operate *involuntarily*. In other words, I don't have to volunteer to let him operate; he takes over because there isn't any guardianship by the Holy Spirit or the Great Bishop, Jesus Christ—the Bishop of my heart (1 Peter 2:25).

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the Word of God says, "There hath no temptation taken you but

such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

God is saying, “Listen, you can be kept from temptation. You *can* stay out of it.” God has done this for us so often. We all remember times when we have seen the temptation; we have even felt it. Then God provided a way, and we escaped the temptation. Satan wasn’t able to get us.

According to 2 Peter 2:9, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” *He* knows how to do it! For example, when it comes to marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:5 says to the husband and wife, “Defraud ye not one the other... that Satan tempt you not,” except during a woman’s monthly cycle or for a time of fasting and prayer with mutual consent.

If a couple defrauds one another and either one withholds having sex for any reason other than what the Word of God states, the devil will tempt. If there is no compatibility and they do not work out the marital relationship in love, the devil is going to tempt them. But when Christians do what God says and defraud not one another in the marriage relationship, they avoid

temptation.

The Ways of Temptation

Temptation comes in so many different ways. In Genesis 12:10-13, when Abraham left Canaan because of a famine, he was tempted to lie. Because he was outside of the geographical will of God and, therefore, outside of divine guidance, he *did* lie. Later, he brought a little Egyptian slave named Hagar back home, had sex with her, and Ishmael was born. Ever since, there has been fighting between the Israeli and Arab nations.

You see, Abraham was tempted: He did not exercise faith to stay in Canaan when times were bad. He didn't trust God for a way to escape the temptation to leave Canaan. So he left the land God brought him into and went down to Egypt.

It is the same with Elimelech, Naomi's husband, written about in the Book of Ruth. The name Elimelech means "God who is my king." He married Naomi, whose name means "pleasant." They had two sons, Mahlon and Chileon, and their names in the Hebrew meant, "sickness" and "pining away."

Again, because of a famine, they left the land God had given to His people and went down to Moab, which represents the flesh. In Moab, the

two sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. While there, all three men died. It was a very bad time.

God had commanded Israel to have nothing to do with the Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:3). But Elimelech forgot who he was and, instead, trusted in the arm of the flesh. In application, “God who is my King” married “pleasure,” and ended up with “sickness” and “pining away.” The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a). Little did they know what would take place when they left Jerusalem and went down into Moab—and all because they were tempted to go outside of God’s will.

Afterward, Naomi heard that something wonderful was happening in Jerusalem. She made the trip back, but changed her name to Mara, which means “bitter,” saying, “The almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1:20b-21). And Ruth, of course, whose name means “beautiful grace” went with her and married the kinsman redeemer Boaz (who was in the line of David)—another chapter in the beautiful story of Redemption.

Drawn Away by Lust

We are tempted when we are drawn away. And when we are drawn away by lust (which is anything that is outside of the perfect will of God), we end up being enticed to go further into sin.

So Satan says, “If I can draw you away from the Word of God, from the assembly, from fellowship; if I can draw you away through atmospheric projections, through worldliness on TV, or through any number of things that entice Christians today—I will tell you what will happen. There are six lust patterns that could take over a man: a lust for power, approbation, sensuality, pride, pleasure, and materialism. One of these six lust patterns will take over an area of your life. I will use whatever works, because my goal is simply to draw you away.”

What happens when a believer is drawn away? He doesn't have to do anything bad. He may not even be sinning yet. He is just drawn away.

In 2 Samuel 11:1-2, David stayed home from the battle. That was when he saw Bathsheba bathing on the roof, called for her, and committed adultery with her. To cover up his sin, David

murdered her husband.

How was that possible for a man of God to do? First he was drawn away. Then his lust conceived when he was enticed by the devil. That brought forth sin, and finished in spiritual (and in this case, physical) death.

That is why we *must* deal with temptation.

Chapter Three

AVOID TEMPTATION: WATCH AND PRAY

The desire of all godly men and women—as leaders, as friends, as parents—is to help people from entering into temptation. When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, He told them to say, “Lead us not into temptation.” *Lead us not.* In the garden of Gethsemane, the night before he was crucified, Jesus told Peter, “Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41a). If we will do that, then when the tempter comes around, God will provide a way of escape—and He knows how! That is how we avoid entering into temptation. That is what the Word of God says.

Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights (Matthew 4:1-2), and for every temptation, He was led by the Spirit to overthrow the devil. How? By the expressed Word of God. In Matthew 4:11, Jesus spoke the Word,

and the devil had to leave Him.

Temptation comes in so many different ways. A woman at home who watches soap operas wouldn't do what she sees on that soap opera, with all of its immorality. The average Christian woman would not *do* it, and yet if she allows herself to be entertained by it, she will be drawn away in her mind because she didn't keep a watch and pray.

We must guard our hearts. One way is to be careful about what we let our eyes gaze upon. Realize that Samson let his guard down, was careless with Delilah, gave in to his lust, and ended up getting his eyes plucked out (Judges 16:21).

Also we have to remember Solomon. He was so comfortable with money and materialism that he let down his guard and did everything under the sun that was sinful. He was drawn away, gave in to lust, and was enticed. The lust conceived, brought forth sin, and sin brought forth death.

Unload Your Options

God wants to help you realize that you don't have to be tempted. The Word of God along with the filling of the Spirit is your strongest de-

fense. Proverbs 13:20 says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Purpose to be around men and women who will not tempt you, but who will edify you.

In Psalm 101:2, the Word of God says, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way....I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." And in verse 3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." In other words, I will not look at anything that could infect me.

Then in the next verse, *4b*, the psalmist says, "I will not know a wicked person." That means, I will not have wicked friends. I will not be around people who would infect me with the world. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I will behave perfectly in mine own house, and I will not "know," or relate to, them that are wicked. I can pray for them, but I will not relate to them.

When the Bible says, "If you continue in My word, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free, and the Son shall set you free indeed," it means that I will be free to know what is going on in my unconscious mind (see John 8:31, 32, 36). I will be free to guard my heart,

to keep Satan from placing evil thoughts in my subconscious and feeding me involuntary suggestions that haven't conceived yet. But if the lust joins with a mental projection in the subconscious and results in conception, it brings forth personal sin. And the sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

We all have come too far and gone too far to live in constant temptation. Why then would we make temptation an option?

For Christ and the Gospel's Sake

The Word of God says in 2 Samuel 7:21, "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." God has done great things that we may know Him and know that which comes from Him.

In Mark 8:35, Jesus says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." But then He says, "but whosoever shall lose his life *for my sake and the gospel's*, the same shall save it." We do it for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake.

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I don't want to be tempted because I want to live

for Christ's sake. Everything I have is in Christ, because God provided it—for Christ's sake. For every sin we commit, God has forgiven and paid the price—for Christ's sake.

We are saved forever, because God gave us the Holy Spirit through Jesus for Christ's sake. Everything was for Christ's sake. You and I will be members of the Bride of Christ in heaven at the Rapture. We will marry Him and feast at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—for Christ's sake.

We were saved for Christ's sake, and now He wants us to forgive one another for Christ's sake and for the Word's sake.

Psalms 115:1 is a precious verse that says, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." For mercy's sake, for truth's sake—not unto us, O Lord! But give glory to Thy name for the sake of mercy and doctrine. That is what the Word of God says.

"Though Satan Should Buffet..."

Jesus said to the disciples, "I want you to always pray that you are not led into temptation." Be aware of the choices you make voluntarily. Don't be overcome involuntarily by the devil, who is the tempter.

Many people are in prison who started in this negative pattern. Some of them bore the name of Christ when they started their downward trend. They didn't realize that their souls were being seduced involuntarily by the devil.

If you watch certain things, read certain things, and think certain thoughts without volunteering to think with God, your mind involuntarily takes in more and more that is not of God, and Satan sees it. At some point, you need to have more and then more. And though you don't mean to do it, and you don't want to do it, you are tempted.

Once a person falls into temptation, he ends up in spiritual death and wants to give up. He doesn't think he can make it because it has been going on so long. But God says, "You can get out of temptation. Not only that, you can *stay* out of temptation." God will provide a way out of temptation.

Chapter Four

TOUGH LOVE: ONE WAY OUT

We love our children. As parents and as school teachers and administrators, we would like to make it difficult for young people to be tempted. When discipline is administered to them, it is not to be unkind nor to legislate the letter of the law, but to love. Yet, love has godly standards, and tough love is there to help.

When God chastises a believer, as He did King David, it is to help him, to deliver him, and to make him realize that he can have peace. Though God loved David tremendously, it was tough love.

In Psalm 122:8, David said, "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." One Hebrew translation says, "That I might speak peace with my mouth, because that peace is within me."

Though we want to be relaxed and enjoy one another in relationships, we need to keep a

watch on our hearts so we maintain peace within. Certainly there is nothing wrong with doing certain things, but it is what goes on from there. It is having the maturity to understand that if you stop at A, then you will not enter into B, C, and D.

This is the picture: If a person is not drawn away, he won't enter into lust. If he doesn't enter into lust, he will not be enticed. If he is not enticed, the lust doesn't conceive. If lust doesn't conceive, it doesn't bring forth sin. If it doesn't bring forth sin, sin doesn't end in spiritual death.

The steps that lead to spiritual death start with being drawn away. The Lord wants us to choose to be loved by God, choose to love God, and choose to be filled with the Spirit.

Restore One Another

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

If I am involved in a ministry of restoration, loving others purely with God's love, that is going to decrease Satan's opportunities to tempt me. I will be one place with God, filled with the

Holy Spirit and walking in His love, instead of another place, considering my options and being drawn away.

To be drawn away is to experience what happened to Solomon when he became comfortable with his riches (1 Kings 10, 11). It happened to Peter when he was in the wrong place, warming his hands by the wrong fire (John 18:18). It happened to Demas when he went back in the world (2 Timothy 4:10). It happened to Barnabas as well. Barnabas was in a place to be used mightily by God. He was a good man, a great comforter, and he helped Paul. But at some point, Barnabas was drawn away from the perfect plan of God.

During the summer months, at the start of school days in the fall, or when the harshness and sameness of the winter months begin to tempt you, stay miles away from temptation. Make a voluntary decision to hear from God and be filled with His Spirit. You will never be sorry. You will avoid the tempter and his involuntary infections.

How to Rob the Devil

Let God keep you from temptation. Be delivered from it. Avoid it. If you are living in God,

you will not be in a place where the devil can get you. Stay away from the area of your weakness. More than that, don't be around the areas that you *could* be weak in. Listen to God; be discerning. Don't be around the people who make you weak.

Also, do not wear the clothes that will make somebody else weak. A woman who dresses immodestly may cause someone who is weak to stumble. She may think she is just being fashionable, but she needs to understand that man is tempted through the eye gate. Therefore, use wisdom and do not tempt others (1 Corinthians 8:9).

We will never be tempted while reading the Bible. We will not be tempted when we meditate on the Word of God. We are not tempted when we are praying. We will not be tempted with a spirit of lust while soul winning. If something unexpected comes in to tempt us, we can just sing a melody to God in our hearts.

To be successfully tempted by the devil, a person has to be drawn away by the lust in his heart and enticed. The man who never watches an X-rated movie and never has pornography around isn't going to be tempted. It is only if he sees it, and stares at it, and is drawn away that

he gets tempted. And then the devil involuntarily pollutes his soul, just to rob him of fellowship and godliness and peace that comes with experiencing the grace of deliverance.

We can rob Satan of his right to tempt us by not being in the wrong place, not being with the wrong people, not thinking the wrong thoughts, and not exposing ourselves to wickedness. As we rob Satan of tempting us, we go from glory to glory and victory to victory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Satan says, “How am I going to test that guy? All he does is serve God seven days a week. He’s always serving God! Get in there and do something to tempt him! Somehow, we’ve got to tempt him.”

Then the devil says, “We’ve got to draw him away and get him relaxed first, where he isn’t thinking of Jesus.”

As we are constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, we are protected by a wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5)—a spiritual wall of positional truth, a wall of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Why does a wall of fire protect us? Because God protects people who choose to think with Him and are filled with His Holy Spirit, who will not be led into temptation.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ never once gave in to temptation. Instead, He bore all of our sins in His perfect humanity. When we believed, He gave us a robe, the garment of His righteousness. Is there sin underneath His righteousness in our hearts? Yes, but all He sees is the robe (Isaiah 61:10). Though we will be disciplined by the Holy Spirit, it is so we can have peaceable fruits of righteousness in heaven (Hebrews 12:11).

As we grow in grace and truth, we will hate sin more. Will the grace message make us want to sin? No. It will make us love Jesus more.

We all hate diseases, such as cancer. But as much as we hate cancer, we love the people who have it. Likewise, we hate sin. But when someone we love is in sin, the more we want to love him and do whatever we can to help him out. That is what Jesus did.

As you mature in your walk of faith, the tempter is bound to do everything he can to

cause you to doubt, or to waiver, or, more likely, to become familiar with your position in Christ. But remember, "It is written...." Apply the Word of God in those times when you are tempted, understanding the difference between voluntary thinking (choosing to make right decisions) and involuntary thinking (being tossed about by Satan's projections to the unconscious mind). Draw near instead of being drawn away when you fall into diverse temptations. He has made a way of escape.

Precious Father, we thank You that Satan can't tempt us when he wants to. Thank You that we have a way to prevent temptation and to be ready for the attack if it comes to promote us in the angelic contest.

Thank You that as far as Satan's power goes, it is not as easy for him to entice us if we know how to guard our hearts. Thank You for the provision of your Word and Your presence through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.