

**HOW TO  
SURVIVE  
TEMPTATION**

**Twenty Eighth Annual  
Truth In Love  
Lectureship**

**Jonathan Burns, Editor**

**Hosted by the  
East Hill Church of Christ**



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# Introduction

**F**or twenty-eight years the Truth In Love Lectureship has stood with the Word of God and presented the Truth on five hundred and thirty five topics. This volume represents a topic which will always be near and dear to the hearts of the faithful: How To Survive Temptation. Completing a project of this size takes many hours, several phone calls for advice, wonderful leadership from the Elders, and so much help from many dedicated Christian friends.

After Jesus was baptized by John, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:12, and Luke 4:1). The exact location of this temptation is unknown, and the location is factually irrelevant. What is important is that the Lord was alone, fasting, tempted, tested, and triumphant. Jesus was completely submissive to the will of the Father and left an example that will stand true for all of eternity.

Every day mankind is tested. We have seen others fold under temptation. We have seen others not able to conquer certain habits. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we learn that temptation is not unbearable. We must understand and remember that temptation is not uncommon. Paul promised that all who live godly in Christ will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), and it needs to be remembered that we must be concerned about the one who can destroy both flesh and soul (Matthew 10:28). Everyone will have occasions when they will sin, and we are thankful for the precious blood of Christ (James 1:14-15 and 1 John 1:8-10).

You may still be asking, “What is the Truth In Love Lectureship?” The Lectureship is designed to be a week where

## Introduction

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we can come and go in the study of God's Word. The word "lectureship" sometimes makes people feel that this event is for Elders, Deacons, and Preachers. We want you to know that the Truth In Love Lectureship is for everyone, from new members to people dedicated to the study of God's Word. Simply put, the Truth In Love Lectureship is for everyone. We produce a lectureship book, CD's, DVD's, Blu-Ray Disk, MP3 Thumb Drive and other valuable resources for Christians. This book is designed to help the brotherhood and world have a resource that is designed to help us survive temptation. We hope this book will help us all in our service unto the Almighty God. We are thankful for you spending time with us in this book and reading and studying God's Word. Remember, we must be God's people who shine our lights in a world of darkness.

Jonathan Burns

# Dedication

**I**n 2014 the elders of the East Hill Congregation came to my home in Murfreesboro, TN and extended to me the opportunity to come and be a part of the preaching ministry at East Hill. It was a very exciting day for my family and something we are thankful for each year. They allowed a young man to come and be a part of a work that has for many years been a beacon of hope, truth, and love because East Hill is centered in the Gospel. The 2018 Truth In Love Lectureship is the third year I have been blessed to direct and am thankful to have three men in whom I can count upon every day.

This is the twenty eighth volume sponsored by the East Hill Congregation. Twenty-five volumes preceded me as Director and Editor. These volumes have been an encouragement to my preaching and study in God's Word. Each edition, over the years, have been valuable to the students of the Memphis School of Preaching. The elders at East Hill see it necessary to put sound materials in the hands of Preaching Students and the Brotherhood so we can be strengthened in our pursuit toward Heaven.

The production of these volumes required substantial number of individual authors (and those who supported them), a large staff of individuals who proof each manuscript and lectureship handouts, editors, typesetters, and a congregation who has supported this lectureship for twenty-eight years. In addition, we have a staff of people who help us clean, run audio, record video lessons, create DVD's, CD's, Blu-Ray Disks, and audio thumb drives. All these individuals ensure that these lectures can be viewed all over the world for years

Dedication

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to come. It takes a spiritual army to make a lectureship successful.

Above all things, it takes an eldership to stand up and support such an event for so many years. Currently Joe Cooper, Joe Christopher, and Johnny Jackson



fulfill the office of the eldership

at East Hill. These men have the vision to keep such a large work going and headed in the right direction.



East Hill

is truly blessed to have them serve in this capacity.

This is an extremely small effort from a young man, who is blessed tremendously, to honor these men. They have been my friends, advisors, encouragers, and above all they have been my elders. East Hill loves to serve, and it is my goal to help us continue to love and support our elders.



In Christian Love,  
Jonathan Burns



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**D**ecisions...decisions. Every day, from the time that we wake up in the morning, until the moment we drift off to sleep at night, we are confronted with a seemingly infinite number of decisions. What shall I wear today? What shall I have for breakfast? Shall I pack a lunch, or shall I buy my lunch today? Shall I be polite, or shall I be rude? Shall I be honest, or shall I lie? Shall I be helpful, or shall I be hurtful? Most of the decisions we must make on a daily basis are relatively mundane and insignificant, but some of the decisions with which we are confronted are deadly serious and can have an impact upon our own eternal destiny. It is decisions like this, "Shall I do what I know is right, or shall I do what I know is wrong?" which are the essence of temptation.

According to Webster's Dictionary, "temptation" is "the act of tempting or the state of being tempted esp. to evil: ENTICEMENT." A secondary definition is "something tempting: a cause or occasion of enticement." Also, according to Webster's Dictionary, to "tempt" is "to entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain." A tertiary definition is "to

make trial of: TEST.” These are fitting descriptions of what it means to “tempt” and to experience “temptation,” but the Bible offers us some more subtle nuances in its usage of those terms.

According to James 1:14, “...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.” The purpose of temptation is to **draw us away** from that which is good. As long as we remain in close spiritual proximity to our Lord, within the security and safety of His church, we are saved from the ravages of sin (Acts 2:47). The Devil does not have the power to forcibly remove us from the source of our salvation, so he must try to entice us into leaving the Lord, of our own free will (Romans 8:38,39). Everyone who is tempted is drawn away **of his own lust**, which means that the Devil is going to strike each of us at our weakest points. All of us are vulnerable to certain temptations (Romans 3:23). Speaking from my own experience, I can say with confidence that there are certain temptations, which are devastating to some, but have no appeal to me, at all. On the other hand, there are also temptations, which are devastating to me, that others seem to resist with ease. The point is that we all have our weaknesses, and the Devil is eager to exploit them to the fullest (1 Peter 5:8). According to Webster’s Dictionary, to **entice** is “to attract artfully or adroitly or by arousing hope or desire: TEMPT.” Using temptation, the Devil seeks to lure us away from God; toward him, by attracting us with the promise of the fulfillment of our desires. In this way, the Devil lays a trap for us, which is designed to get us to come out of the safety and security of God’s house, so he can have us in his possession, once again (James 1:15).

The Bible teaches that, while temptation is dangerous and poses a serious threat to our immortal souls, it is also

something that can be good for us, spiritually. As James 1:12 puts it, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Like the “beatitudes” that Jesus listed in His “sermon on the mount” (Matthew 5:3-12), this assurance from James seems, on its surface, to be counter-intuitive: “**blessed** are those who are **tempted**?” But, the key to understanding this “beatitude” of the General Epistles is the word, “endureth.” Once again, our dear friend, Webster, tells us that to “endure” is to “continue in the same state,” and to “remain firm under suffering or misfortune without yielding.” The fact that temptation must be “endured” suggests that it is a form of suffering, like persecution, or affliction, or loss (2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 11:25; 1 Corinthians 3:15). If we can suffer through temptation, without giving in to its demands of us, then we will grow stronger against it, the next time we face it. As James put it,

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

Just as other types of suffering can strengthen us, and build us up, so can the endurance of temptation to sin! Of course, the opposite of this is also true: the more we give in to temptation, the weaker we will become against it, the next time we face it.

To help us endure temptation, it is important to understand the source from which it comes. James 1:13 reads,

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.

At times when life seems especially difficult, people tend to think that God is heaping trials and temptations upon them (Job 13:15). Some even have the idea that God takes some kind of perverse delight in seeing humanity suffer, but nothing could be further from the truth (1 John 4:10)! God loves humanity (John 3:16). He wants to see us all make good decisions and prosper (2 Peter 3:9). He does not set out to make life more difficult for us, but to give us every advantage in our struggle against temptation (Psalm 119:11). The source of temptation to do evil is the Devil, himself. He is called, “the tempter,” in 1 Thessalonians 3:5. He is depicted as lurking in the shadows; watching for an opportunity to catch us in his snare, in 1 Peter 5:8 and 9. The Devil hates us (he is our “adversary;” 1 Peter 5:8). He wants us to fail to serve God faithfully, and to suffer in eternity (Revelation 20:15). The path of righteousness is fraught with peril, and full of obstacles, but God did not put them there—the Devil does that!

As “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), Satan manipulates a great many people and human institutions in his efforts to tempt us to do evil. Everyone on Earth, who is not actively serving the Lord is serving the Devil (Romans 6:16-18), and is exerting a negative influence over everyone who is trying to do the will of God. Paul wrote, in 2 Corinthians 11:15, “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” What is especially insidious about the tempter and those who serve him is that they do not always approach us in such a direct way. 2 Corinthians 11:14 warns us, “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” It’s been around the Internet a billion times, and it’s still true: “The devil doesn’t come to you with his ugly, red face and scary horns. He comes to you disguised

as everything you've ever wanted." Temptation offers to us the promise of satisfaction, fulfillment, pleasure, and the answer to all that troubles us, but it makes false promises. The pleasure of sin lasts but "for a season" (Hebrews 11:25), and in its wake, it leaves only vanity, guilt, regret, and the consequences of our own foolish choices (Galatians 6:7,8).

It is also important to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the best helps we have with the temptations we face. Hebrews 2:18 says, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Once more, Webster helps out by telling us that "succor" is "help." Jesus is a help to all who are tempted, because He understands what it is like to be tempted. Hebrews 4:15 says,

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus was tempted by the Devil, and He successfully resisted every temptation—showing us that it is possible to do so. Some people think that Jesus was tempted only three times in His whole life (Matthew 4:1-11), but there is no reason for us to conclude that this was the case. It is more reasonable for us to assume that Jesus was tempted to sin every day of His life, "like as we are," yet He was strong enough never to give in and accumulate any sins of His own (1 Peter 2:21,22). Every human being sins (Romans 3:23), but Jesus is the only one of us who never sinned, which makes Him the only one who can redeem us from slavery to sin (Romans 3:24-26). Therefore, when we are tempted to sin, we must cry out to God for deliverance, and trust that He hears us, and will act in our best interests (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4).

While every temptation to sin is a trial of our faith, there

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## An Introduction To Temptation

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are some trials of faith that do not constitute temptations to sin. Take, for example, the trial of Abraham's faith, in Genesis 22. The first verse says, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham..." As we observed earlier, James 1:13 says,

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.

How can the Bible say that God tempted Abraham **and** that God does not tempt anyone? Doesn't that constitute a blatant contradiction? Of course, the Bible does not contradict itself, and there is an explanation for this apparent disagreement between James and Genesis. Back when we looked at the dictionary definitions of "temptation," we noted that there were primary, secondary and tertiary definitions. The primary definition was "the act of tempting or the state of being tempted." The secondary definition was "something tempting: a cause or occasion of enticement." The tertiary definition was "to make trial of: TEST." It is the tertiary definition of "temptation" that applies in Abraham's case. Abraham was commanded to,

Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou  
lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and  
offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the  
mountains which I will tell thee of (Genesis 22:2).

God commanded him to do something that he would never, under any circumstances, have wanted to do, in order to demonstrate that faith in Him requires us to be committed to doing His will, no matter what we may have to sacrifice in the process. Abraham trusted God and his faith was so great that he did what the Lord commanded him to do, right up to the

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point at which an angel stayed his hand from killing his son (Genesis 22:10-12). In a divine commentary on this incident, the book of Hebrews informs us:

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of which it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (Hebrews 11:17-19).

God did not tempt Abraham to do evil, because God would never instruct anyone to do anything that is arbitrarily evil. Abraham knew this about God, and so he did what God commanded him to do, with the understanding that God would make it all right, in the end. In this way, God tested Abraham's faith, without tempting him to commit a sin.

Some accuse God of being evil, because His Word requires people who get married to stay married, with only one exception (Matthew 19:9). Some think that God is cruel, because His Word condemns those who are, for whatever reason, attracted to the same sex (1 Corinthians 6:9). Some think that God is callous, because He allows the free will of men to run amok in the world (Romans 6:16-18). But, as James 2:13 assures us, God is not the source of temptation to do evil; and, as James 1:2 through 4 reminds us, trials and temptations can build up our faith, and make us spiritually stronger. If we are struggling with temptation, we cannot rightly lay the blame for that at God's feet. Knowing that can make us better able to endure temptation.

Another bit of information that Bible gives us, to enable us to struggle against temptation is found in 1 Corinthians 10:13, which reads:

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## An Introduction To Temptation

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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 ye may be able to bear it.

In my own humble opinion, this is the most encouraging verse the whole Bible. It gives us a kind of “spoiler alert” about the outcome of every temptation we face by assuring us of two things. First of all, it assures us that “there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” In other words, whenever you are tempted, you are not facing anything that hasn’t already been faced by someone else. Whenever you get to feeling sorry for yourself—thinking that no one else has ever had to bear the burden you have to bear, lighten up. You are **not** the first person to be tempted, and you are not ever going to face a temptation that is greater than any other. Secondly, it assures us that “God...will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” In other words, **you** are capable of enduring **any** temptation that you may face. Remember that the Devil does not have the power to make you do anything (Romans 8:38,39). Through temptation and enticement, he will try to make you think that resistance is futile, but the truth is that the Devil is a bully, who is not able to stand up against those who fight back (James 4:7). Don’t let the Devil intimidate you, bully you, and convince you that you are powerless against him! Fight the good fight of faith—knowing that your immortal soul is at stake (1 Timothy 6:2).

While temptations to sin may change over time, the nature of temptation remains the same. Take the sin of idolatry, for example. In the ancient world, the vast majority of people worshipped a plethora of god and goddesses, across numerous civilizations and cultures. While we may not be able to find

any temples to Baal, or Diana, or Jupiter, in our communities today, idolatry is still rampant in our society. Remember that an idol is merely something that is more important to us than God (Exodus 20:3). In Colossians 3:5, we told that “covetousness... is idolatry.” In our modern society, covetousness is still the greatest idol of them all. Today, people worship things like work, recreation, and of course, money. Jesus said,

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).

The times have certainly changed, but the baser instincts of humanity have not.

It has frequently been observed that 1 John 2:15 through verse 17 describes the three main avenues through which the Devil endeavors to tempt us. Verse fifteen says,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

We all would do well to remember that the world is the Devil’s domain, and the things that pertain to it are not necessarily good for our souls (2 Corinthians 4:4). That is why James warns us that, “the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” Verse sixteen goes on to say,

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The “lust of the flesh” refers to that which our flesh may **desire**, which might include: sex, drugs, or even food. The “lust of eyes” refers to that which our eyes may **desire**, which

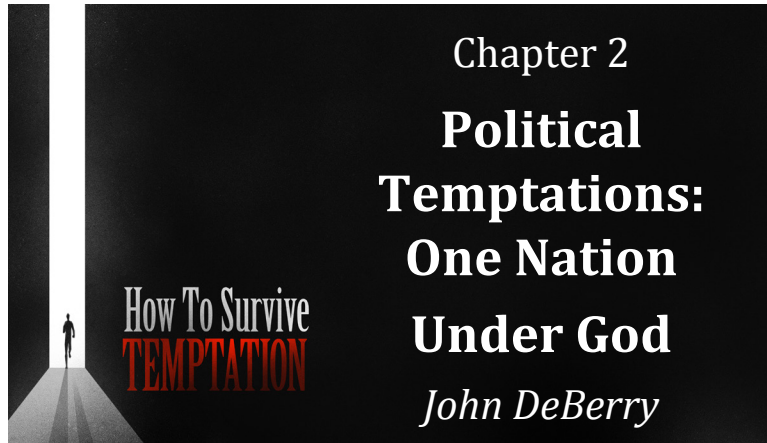
provokes us to covet our neighbor's spouse, or house, or possessions. The "pride of life," refers to unbridled **ambition**, which can destroy our lives on Earth, as well as our eternal destiny. As Paul reminded Timothy,

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:9,10).

Verse seventeen completes the thought: "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The pleasure of sin is temporary (Hebrews 11:25). The consequences of sin are eternal (Romans 6:23). Only those who are obedient to God's commands will experience eternal life (Matthew 7:21).

Think carefully about all of the decisions you have made today. How many of those decisions were choices about a morally right or morally wrong course of action? If you think very carefully, and are absolutely honest with yourself, you may be surprised by how many times per day you are tempted in some way to do something you know you ought not to do, or to say something you know you ought not to say. Consider also that it is equally sinful to fail to do or say something you know you ought to do or say (James 4:17). Temptation to sin is an experience that every human being shares in common. That is why salvation from sin is a need that every human being shares in common (Romans 3:23). There is no doubt that, at some point in your life, dear reader, you have fallen prey to the Devil's machinations against you. The real question is, What have you done about it?

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### Introduction

**W**hen God created Man He created him different from all other creatures He had placed on the good planet earth. When we speak of creation, we speak of the beginning of all things temporal and material. The verb “created,” (Hebrew bara): is used only in reference to God (Elohim), and His divine name and acts. When all other creatures were created, God created His highest and most blessed creature, Man.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and

over every living thing that moveth upon the earth  
(Genesis 1:26-28).

Unlike other creatures, man was made in God's image and likeness. Thus, only man has a spiritual and rational resemblance to his maker. Only man has the intellectual ability to receive and be held accountable to law, reason and the consequences of his decisions. Therefore, because man is a living soul, not just a living creature, he alone has the blessing of eternal life. It must also be noted that man alone has the capacity of eternal death. Because man alone is a free moral agent, he alone has the ability to choose the option which is not in his best interest. Man alone is subject to the intellectual enticement of temptation and its consequences.

### **All People Of All Professions And Endeavors Are Tempted**

Because we are all human, we are all subject to temptation. All accountable individuals are, therefore, a target of the tempter, who wants to destroy our very souls.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The apostle Paul personally knew and was compromised by temptation. As a matter of fact, he was one of the most politically connected persons of his day. He was both a Jewish aristocrat and a powerful Roman citizen. Saul of Tarsus should have had the discernment because of his background to resist the temptation of political and spiritual persecution. However,

like many others, he was blinded by pride and prejudice and empowered by his elite political status. Paul taught his son in the gospel, Timothy, to

Let no man despise or look down on his youth, but he was to be an example of the believers, in word, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

Within this teaching, the old battered preacher Paul is urging the young zealous preacher, Timothy, to not fall into the draws and temptations that often come with notoriety. Paul, also encouraged Timothy to, “Shun profane and vain babbling, for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Timothy 2:16). These admonitions were important because Paul certainly recalled that he, as a young well-trained Rabbi, had fallen to “temptation and manipulations.”

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:12-13).

In verse 15 of the same chapter, Paul called himself the “chief of sinners.” He knew that he had survived his plunge into temptation only because he obtained mercy and longsuffering (vs. 16). Saul was an example of a person with political power who chose to use that power to further his personal opinion and animosities.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore. they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:3-4).

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With this in mind and remembrance, Paul exhorted Timothy to resist the temptation to blindly follow anyone or anything in this life that stood against the law and will of God.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Temptation is all around for those involved in politics. The task and test is to make **“Public Policy”** without becoming a **“Public Disgrace.”**

### **The Temptation To Be Politically Correct**

We are certainly in a time when information can be sent all over the world in a matter of minutes. Because of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media platforms, public opinion about an issue can be very quickly accessed. We are constantly bombarded with “opinion polls” and demographic and psychographic studies that are supposed to tell us what the masses think, want, and expect. The slogans these days suggest that those who don’t agree or succumb to the will of the social media masses are on the “wrong side of history.” What a bunch of garbage! The fact is that most of us who have a mature, steady, and Bible-based opinion about what is happening in the world does not put our every thought and action on social media. Those of us who are comfortable with what we believe and in whom we believe do not need the endorsement of strangers on the web to maintain our beliefs. The fact is we are the majority and we vote.

Many of those in the political realm are torn and tempted to only listen to those who make a lot of noise. Those who claim to support “free speech” but only want their speech to



be heard. They create a new reality, a new morality, and a new political correctness, and then bully and shame everyone to support and accept it. Now, in this current political and social atmosphere to be politically correct, one must condone genocide, accept homosexuality, endorse same sex marriage, encourage the allowing of government to raise our children, and completely reject that God exists as the divine authority and the Bible as His Word. In essence, all that we are and stand for must be offered up on the altar of political correctness. Brethren, God has never been happy when that choice is made.

### **The People Wanted A King**

In the book of 1 Samuel, we are given the account of a powerful politician who gave in to the will of the people while ignoring the will of God. Saul, the King of Israel, had been anointed because of an outcry of the public.

And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken, unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them (1 Samuel 8:5-7).

God informed Samuel, who was old and feeble, that the people had rejected their God who had done so much for them. This is a perfect example of what we face in America today and is revealed in scripture for our learning. The people forgot who had made them a nation; they forgot who had guided them in time of war and conflict and certainly forgot from whence came their blessings.

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Their desire to be politically acceptable to others led them to believe that man's organizational structure and leadership was better for the nation than that of God's. How sad, but God gave them what they wanted—a politically correct, man-made King. However, before the King was anointed, God had Samuel warn them of the baggage and servitude that came with the maintenance of a political leader like all the other nations (1 Samuel 8:11-18). Still the people wanted their political leader and not God.

Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken, unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city (1 Samuel 8:19-22).

How many times have we witnessed political superstars rise to office, not for reasons of service or commitment to our morals and value, but as the result of popular uprising of the people? These leaders go into office not with a mandate from God, but a mandate of those who have rejected Him.

Once King Saul was anointed king, he conducted himself just as God had predicted. He knew that he owed his office to the “will of the people” and that was his priority. Saul easily overlooked God's law in order to be politically correct. He did what was politically expedient and not what was spiritually obedient.

When God gave King Saul his orders and agenda concerning his enemies, Saul obviously struggled with

obeying God at the expense of his political popularity. All he had to do to keep God's favor was follow his clear and concise instructions:

Thus, saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass (1 Samuel 15:2-3).

God remembered how His people had been badly treated by Amalek during the Exodus (Exodus 17:8; Numbers 24:20) and ordered their destruction. They were a cruel, hedonist people who worshiped idols, and Saul, thought it reasonable to ignore God's orders.

And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword (1 Samuel 15:7-9).

King Saul became the poster child for political subjectivism. He made a conscious choice to disobey God and please the people.

But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal (1 Samuel 15:21).

God soundly rejected Saul's political rationale and ultimately rejected him, also. The king ended his career and his family's legacy by listening to the voice and will of the mob and not God. Saul was ruined; just as so many have been

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ruined since his tenure by poor judgment in the face of public pressure. Saul's allegiance was not to God but to the people. His futile attempt to blame them only infuriates God more and seals the King's fate.

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Solomon in the book of Proverbs warns against the trust in the power of people not God:

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the Lord. An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked (Proverbs 29:25-27).

This has been the downfall of many politicians, and a trap for those who turn from God's law. When Jesus was dealing with a group of elite and politically connected Jews, John recorded the encounter and sited Isaiah's prophecy being fulfilled about their rejection of the Lord:

Therefore, they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them (John 12:39-40).

Jesus stated, in verse 48, that they had rejected Him and received not His words. Why were they so blind and

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disobedient? Why were the Pharisees so arrogant and hard-hearted? The answer is in verse 43. “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” This is a constant and consistent issue with the politically connected. Jeremiah said, “Cursed is the Man who trusts in Man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord (Jeremiah 17:5).

### **The Temptation Of Convenient Immorality**

In the book of Genesis, chapter thirty-nine, we have the continuation of the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob. After Joseph was labeled the “dreamer” by his brethren in Genesis 37:19, they planned a devious plot against him because of their jealousy and envy. The older brothers of this just and pure young man were upset because of their father’s favoritism, vividly manifested in a coat of many colors. Because of their evil intent and disrespect for their father, they captured Joseph and sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:28). Now Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, and the first son of Rachel was in chains and carried to Egypt by a caravan of Ishmaelites and sold. A military officer with great authority purchased him and brought him into his home. He soon realized that he had made a great purchase and quickly made Joseph the administrator of his estate. The scripture clearly tells of why Joseph was successful in his duties, “The Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man” (Genesis 39:2).

### **Temptation Is Always Near**

In his master’s house, Joseph’s maturity, purity, and fidelity were tested in the same way many men and women in politics are tested today, “And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and

she said, Lie with me” (Genesis 39:7). Potiphar’s wife was obviously a dishonorable woman who had no regard for the vows and promises made to her husband. Her fleshly desires drove her to violate both her husband and Joseph. Because of Potiphar’s status, she was most likely a very attractive woman, who was used to getting her way with men and most certainly expected Joseph to do the same as the others. Think about it, how many men and women with political authority have given in to a woman or man who made themselves easily available for infidelity? Solomon gave good advice that many of our current and past political figures should have heeded:

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell (Proverbs 5:2-5).

According to Solomon, it is folly to think that so called, “stolen sweets are sweeter.” As a matter of fact, he says it is just the destructive. At this early point in his career, Joseph decided to stand with God and not lie with the Devil.

But he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God (Genesis 39:8-9).

And she caught him by his garment, saying, lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out (Genesis 8:12).

I'm sure that to many it would have seemed reasonable to give in and possibly further one's connections and career path. After all, Potiphar's wife was a powerful, rich, and well-connected woman, who could have helped a foreign-born boy move up in the political and business world.

To Joseph, it just was not worth it because he had God on his side. Even though the woman lied and Joseph was imprisoned, he would not compromise his relationship with God to have a relationship with Potiphar's wife. He refused her will and obeyed God's Will. Because of this, it would be God who would direct Joseph's career path and allow him to prosper:

But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper (Genesis 39:21-23).

Even in trouble and imprisonment, God allowed Joseph to advance and prosper. Those who are brought low by the evil hand of man will always be brought up by the blessed hand of God.

There will always be those who will offer themselves freely to those who appear to have a "thimble full of fame, power, and authority." Those weak and sickly souls who follow musicians, actors, sports stars, politicians and even preachers, considering it a personal achievement to seduce, compromise and destroy them. The problem is nothing is free

and most of these greedy, foolish and short-sighted chumps don't see it coming till they are exposed and disgraced. It makes me cringe to see wicked and conniving women and men stand proudly telling the public about their sordid affairs and sexual exploits. What a shame! And people just love to see it played out in the media. Everyone loves a trainwreck, and presidents, governors, mayors, legislators, councilmen, and others have been derailed by this temptation. Paul encourages all of us to use discipline and refrain from this temptation:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).

If more politicians were holy, perhaps America could continue to be a holy nation.

### **Politicians Must Not Yield To Temptation**

Because Joseph did not give in to temptation, he left prison and sat in a political position second only to Pharaoh himself. Can you imagine the fear in Potiphar's house when they realized that their former slave was not the ruler of the whole land? Think about how many promising political careers have been cut short or compromised by yielding to temptations. How many times have we watched the news and shook our heads because some short-sighted and unwise public officials have ruined themselves because of greed, lust, and a lack of discipline. How many sad wives have we



witnessed standing beside an unfaithful husband and how many husbands have we bowed in shame, standing beside an unfaithful wife, as they resigned their elected office in the wake of scandal and disgrace. Sometimes it is best to just run, run fast and run far away from the easy temptations of the flesh. For politicians who want to avoid these sure pitfalls, take the Apostle Paul's advice about personal and spiritual discipline:

I, therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:26-27).

If you don't want to be just another "castaway," kicked out of office by people who expected more and better of you, don't yield to temptation.

### **All Power Is From God**

When we examine the scripture, as well as, the evening news it becomes clear that those in power forget who gives and takes away power. From the kings of the world recorded in the Old Testament, even kings of Israel, there is the temptation to forget. David, Solomon and others lost sight of the throne and that it was He who maintained the authority. When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he understood that they were in the capital city of the empire that ruled the world. Still he was clear to point out that God, not Caesar, had all authority.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.  
For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God:

and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Romans 13:1-4).

While Paul espouses our responsibility to the government, he teaches that the “higher power is established by God, and delegated by God, and he maintains authority and judgment.” God, therefore, places political leaders in place to uphold good and punish bad. Thus, Christians are commanded to obey the law and do good. ”Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3:1).

Politicians are not to be able to point a finger at the bad behavior of the Lord’s people in order to justify their own. We are to uphold the law and the constitution so that we speak out, and speak with integrity and credibility when God’s law is violated. God intends that we shine when politicians walk in darkness, and that our light brings him glory (1 Peter 2:12-14).

Peter wanted the church to understand that crooked politicians, judges, and authority figures will abound. God’s remedy and response is not riot, looting and violent civil disobedience. The remedy is Godliness and personal civil engagement.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour

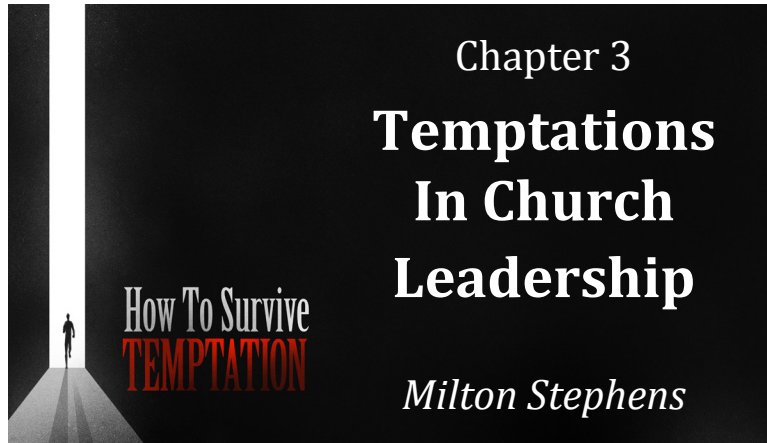
all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king violent civil disobedience authority figures will abound. God's remedy and response is not riot, looting, and the remedy is Godliness and personal civil engagement. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king (1 Peter 2:15-17).

Do you vote? Do you raise your children to understand our values? Do you lift the cross of Christ among the unbelievers? Are you steadfast and unmovable? If so, then you are showing the world the difference.

### **Conclusion — Don't Presume To Play God**

When the Apostle Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, Acts 17, he witnessed the worship of idols by the unlearned and untaught. He called them too superstitious and taught them the truth about God. Because of ignorance, they made assumptions that were widely held in the political atmosphere of Rome. The Caesar himself was considered to be a god, who had the power of life and death in his hands. Many politicians today take the same authority as did Caesar. They determine who lives and who dies, who prospers and who perishes, who is liberated and who is enslaved. This attitude has brought wicked consequences on many nations, both past and present, because of the greed, arrogance and obstinance of selfish political leaders. Blood flows like water in streets all over the world. Solomon wrote, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2).

We as a nation mourn when politicians decide that the child inside of a mother's womb is not human. We mourn when men and women, as God created them, can have their gender reassigned. Therefore, a man can be called a woman and woman can be called a man because the politicians say so. We mourn because those who are sick, old, disabled, and mentally challenged can be devalued and discarded by the politically powerful. We mourn because our families are being destroyed by bureaucratic interference and the political meddling of unbelieving, unsaved and unrighteous national leaders. What is happening in America is truly a shame, because of those who are too weak to resist the temptations of political power. Solomon said it well and we should all take heed before it is too late, "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." It's time for us to resist the temptation to elect unrighteous politicians!



I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to be a part of the 2018 Truth In Love Lectureship. I am thankful to the elders of the East Hill congregation, Joe Christopher, Joe Cooper, Johnny Jackson, and the preacher, Jonathan Burns, for the invitation. For 28 years the East Hill congregation has presented the Truth In Love Lectureship, a wonderful opportunity for Christians to: “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

### **Introduction**

Temptation is common to all. The Apostle Paul wrote in the inspired letter to the Corinthians concerning temptation,

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 ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

To understand temptation, and how to overcome it, we must know something about temptation. God did not leave the subject a mystery; the Bible tells us what we need to know.

Where does temptation come from? How does temptation work? What are the dangers and the result of temptation? The answers to all of these questions, and other questions concerning temptation, are revealed in God's word. In the New Testament book that bears his name, James wrote:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 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. Do not err, my beloved brethren (James 1:12-16).

In the book of 1 John, we learn through the inspired pen of John about the avenues in which man will be tempted to sin: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Notice two illustrations of how Satan uses all three categories: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and Jesus in the wilderness. In Eve's case, first, after producing distrust in her heart toward God, Satan would show her the food value in the forbidden fruit. That it would be good and desirable for food could not be denied. Second, to Eve the fruit was pleasant to the eyes. She did not see the danger of death. She saw the outward appearance and how pleasing it was to look upon. Third, Satan told Eve that God did not want her to eat of the forbidden fruit because it would make her wise as a god. Satan wanted her to be suspicious of the motives of God.

Satan had a conversation with Jesus after his being forty days without food. First, he touched on one of man's basic needs, physical food. His denial of Jesus' being the Son of God was followed by the suggestion to turn the stones into food. Second, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms, power, wealth and earthly splendor. But, Jesus saw the price of having to deny the sovereignty of God by bowing to Satan. Third, with Jesus he tried to create a public display where Jesus would make a scene of the care God would provide for Him. Can you imagine how quickly people might follow Him after witnessing a jump from the pinnacle of the temple and His fall being broken by legions of angels before he struck the ground? Jesus was not seeking recognition by making Himself a public spectacle. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

The consequences of sin have been placed upon every generation since sin entered the world. The Devil will never cease in his attempt to cause man to sin.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

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The devil, in his efforts to hurt the cause of Christ and the work of the Church, can do much harm and damage by affecting the leadership of a congregation. By affecting the leadership he can influence the worship, preaching, teaching, outreach programs, and every other work of the congregation. How the leadership deals with temptation will determine the soundness of a congregation.

### **Church Leadership**

In the New Testament, men who were appointed to oversee the local congregation were called by several different names. Elders, presbyters, overseers, bishops, pastors and shepherds were terms used to identify the men who were appointed over the local congregations of the Lord's church. For our study we will use the term **elders**, understanding there are other names used to identify this office.

As we discuss leadership in the Lord's church, we will be talking primarily about elders. They are the overseers of the congregation.

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy concerning the qualifications of those who were to be appointed elders in the Lord's church.

This, is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church



of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

### **Temptations In Leadership**

For over forty years I have had the great honor and privilege of working under the elders of several congregations in various locations. These men have been great examples to me. I have seen elders work tirelessly and faithfully for the cause of Christ. They love the Lord's church and are dedicated and faithful to the congregation they were appointed to oversee.

I am sad to say I have seen men who were not as faithful as they should have been in their work as an elder.

Elders who are appointed according to the qualifications listed in the New Testament, are not above temptation. They are an elder in the Lord's church, but it does not mean they will face fewer temptations than others in the church.

When the apostle Paul had ended his time with the Ephesian elders and was delivering his farewell address to them, he instructed them first to take heed unto themselves and then unto the flock over which they had been made overseers.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves

shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:27-31).

We will notice several thoughts regarding temptation and leadership in the Lord's church.

### **Temptation In Leadership — Take Heed Unto Yourself**

I would like to notice briefly some thoughts on how an elder might be tempted individually. Then we will notice how an eldership might be tempted.

An elder might be tempted not think as highly of the work of an elder as he should, and not see the importance of fulfilling his responsibilities. The elders have serious responsibilities, to watch for the souls of the flock, to protect the flock and feed the flock over which they have been made an overseer. The responsibility should never be taken lightly.

An elder might be tempted to elevate himself above the other elders which make up the eldership. Each elder that makes up the eldership of a congregation has the same authority. There is not one scripture that authorizes having only one elder. In every instance in the New Testament, where elders are mentioned, it is always in the plural. It is the eldership that has the authority in the church, and not any one man apart from the others.

An elder might be tempted to talk about information that should be held in strict confidence. Elders will have knowledge of information others do not. People will talk to the elders about problems in their marriage, with children, parents, friends, co-workers, and other members of the church.

A member of the church might be struggling with sin in his or her life and bring it before to the elders for help. It might be a problem within the eldership. A problem could arise between the elders and the preacher, deacon, teacher, or any member of the church. These are not the only situations that could arise where trust and confidence are a factor. An elder may have knowledge of many things he should not speak about to anyone, unless they have the need and right to know. Irreparable damage can be done by one word spoken that should be held in confidence.

An elder must be a man of prayer. Paul taught the Thessalonian Christians to pray often. The awesome responsibility that comes with being an elder in the Lord's church demands much prayer.

An elder must read and study the Bible. Continued spiritual growth is a must for a man who serves in the office of an elder (2 Peter 3:18). He will need the comfort, strength, encouragement, and knowledge that comes only by reading studying the Word of God.

An elder will be tempted in his everyday life. It is important that the elder be the example that a Christian should be at work, at home and in the community. Much harm can and has been done to congregations of the Lord's church by elders, preachers, and other Christians who are not the example they should be (Matthew 5:16).

An elder will succumb to temptation and sin. John says if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). An elder should correct any sin as soon as possible. If the sin is public in nature, the matter should be corrected publicly, if the sin is private in nature, the matter should be corrected privately.

An elder will not be perfect, but he can be faithful. God

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expects **faithfulness**. I cannot be a perfect husband, father, or preacher. But, I can be a **faithful** husband, father and preacher.

When an elder does something he should not do or fails to do something he should have, he should repent of the sin and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Any Christian should do the same.

In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders Paul said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...” (Acts 20:28).

### **Temptation In Church Leadership — Overseers**

I would like to notice briefly some thoughts on how an eldership might be tempted as they oversee a congregation of the Lord’s Church.

Each elder should have the genuine love, respect and trust of and for his fellow elders, as they work together to serve the Lord.

In 1 Peter chapter five, Peter was writing to elders in the Lord’s church. Peter was an apostle of Jesus Christ and also an elder in the church. In 1 Peter he was writing to instruct and encourage the elders in their work.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3).

An eldership might be tempted to oversee a congregation of the Lord’s church like a board of directors would make

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decisions for a company or corporation. The degree to which a congregation is willing to follow an eldership depends largely on how the eldership maintains the love, respect, and appreciation of the congregation.

The relationship of the elders to members of the congregation is not one like a supervisor—employee relationship, or a boss—worker relationship. It is a relationship much closer. The relationship of the elders to the members of the congregation they serve is one of care, concern, compassion and love.

The Scripture describes this relationship as a shepherd and sheep relationship. The shepherd knows the sheep, feeds, protects, oversees and cares for the sheep (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:2-3).

The elders can be a part of the lives of members of the congregation in many ways. They will have the opportunity to be a part of the happy times. These are occasions when children and grandchildren are born, get married, and good things happen in the lives of families and individuals.

They, also will have the opportunity to be a part of the sad times. Occasions when deaths occur in families, times when accidents happen, sickness, or a great tragedy takes place in their lives and the lives of their family and friends. Elders are in a unique position to affect the lives of individuals in all situations. They can be a great influence for good and the cause of Christ.

An elder might be tempted to isolate himself from the congregation. Elders should maintain a close relationship with the congregation they oversee. Each elder should be the kind of man any member of the congregation would feel free to talk with about any matter of concern.

Communication between the elders and congregation is

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very important. The elders should strive to keep those who serve under their oversight informed about the work and efforts of the congregation.

Providing a financial report on a regular basis will keep the congregation informed about the financial matters of the congregation. This will help eliminate many questions and misunderstandings about the contributions and expenditures of the church.

It is good for elders to stand before the congregation on a regular basis to inform, encourage and support the work of the church; also, to remind the congregation of their stand for the truth and desire to follow the New Testament pattern for the congregation.

Elders might be tempted to exempt themselves from their own decisions. An eldership should never ask the members of the congregation to do anything the elders themselves are not willing to do. Remember, the work of the eldership is leading and being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).

An eldership might be tempted to alter the teachings or worship of the church. The elders have authority in matters of expediency and human judgement. They are not to instruct the preacher to alter the preaching of the Word, or a teacher to teach anything but scriptural truth. Paul wrote this message to Timothy and Jesus' words are taught in Matthew's account of the great commission:

Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season;  
reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and  
doctrine (2 Timothy 2:4).

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever  
I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you  
always, even to the end of the world. Amen.  
(Matthew 28:20).

Elders do not have the authority to restructure the Lord's church. The church belongs to the Lord. Christ is the head of the church. He bled, suffered and died for the church, and He has all authority. In Paul's letter to the Colossians he wrote:

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

Temptations in leadership will continue, because the devil will continue in his efforts to hurt and destroy the church. He wants every Christian to fail, he desires is to hinder and affect the work of the church in every way. What better way for him to accomplish his goal than to affect the leadership in each congregation of the Lord's church.

### **Conclusion**

I am thankful for faithful elders! May each Christian pray for the elders, encourage the elders and help them in every way. Let us never do anything to harm the Lord's church, but do everything we can to build up the church. May we never be a burden to the elders, but help them in every way we can as they serve the Lord in their work.

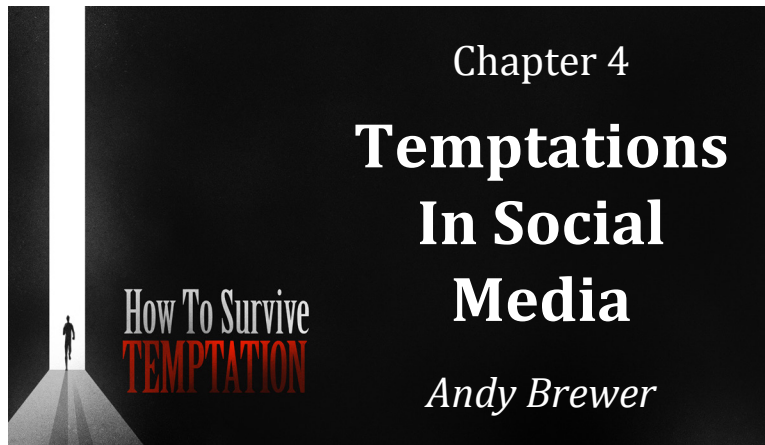
Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable unto you (Hebrews 13:17).

May we understand and appreciate the magnitude of their work and responsibility. They watch for the most important thing. **Our souls!**

## Temptations In Church Leadership

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**I**t all starts innocently enough. You log in, set up your account, start making connections with family and friends, follow a few pages of interest, and check in every so often just to see what's new. You enjoy seeing new pictures, having access to new information, hearing stories from people's lives, and seeing what's going on with your favorite team, TV show, musician, etc. It's a nice leisure time activity that consumes just a little of your day. But with many people at some point along the way things change. Your list of friends or followers started with just your inner circle whom you trust and who share similar beliefs or viewpoints as you, but eventually it starts to expand. You make connections with people you know, people who know people you know, people who neither you nor anyone around you know but live nearby or share similar interests as you. And suddenly, without even seeing it coming, things begin to spiral out of control.

You still enjoy the occasional update from that member of your inner circle, but now your timeline or feed is consumed with everything else going on in everyone else's lives, whether innocent or not so innocent. You're confronted with

everybody's viewpoint on every issue that exists in areas from politics and religion to marriage and child-rearing, and everything in between. Pictures begin to be shared that should never see the light of day. Videos are posted that should never have been captured. The memes, the GIFs, the friend requests, the advertisements, the invitations, the insanity!

But wait...that's only on one social platform. Then imagine joining not just another, but two, three, four, or more additional social media platforms and suddenly you have something that started out innocently enough as a way to keep up with friends and family and stay in the know on some matters in which you have interest to something that has consumed your life.

If you own a smartphone, and according to Pew Research 72% of all Americans do (and 89% have access to the internet), you have the world at your fingertips. That is a very convenient way to live. Most any piece of information you would like can be obtained in a matter of seconds. You can communicate instantly. Want to find a good restaurant, read a good book, order anything from a new charger to a new couch, book plane travel, or find a ride? All of that can be done with a press of the thumb. But convenience comes with a price. You can't have that type of access without some potential danger and that's exactly what the Internet and even the seemingly innocent onslaught of social media contains, the potential for immense danger.

### **It Is What You Make It**

I want to stop for just a minute and say something about the dangers of Internet and social media use. Out of an abundance of caution it is easy to simply label the Internet and social media as being evil. There is just so much bad

stuff that is out there, and more that's being created and uploaded every day, that some jump to the far extreme of condemning use of them altogether. And there are most definitely aspects of internet and social media usage that are evil—40,000,000 Americans are regular visitors to online porn sites ([www.techaddictions.ca](http://www.techaddictions.ca)), 3% of Americans struggle with pathological gambling ([www.techaddictions.ca](http://www.techaddictions.ca)), and 70% of all child trafficking victims are sold online ([www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)). There are most definitely evil uses of the Internet and social media that should open your eyes to how careful you need to be.

But realistically the Internet and social media are inanimate objects. They are neither inherently evil nor good. They are simply tools and can be either used or misused based on the condition of our hearts. The Internet and social media can be used for things that are morally good, morally neutral, or morally evil. They will be whatever you make them.

So it is not the case that just because a person participates in social media that they should be automatically suspect with regard to their motives or their activities online. When used properly social media actually can have some significant value in different areas, but when used improperly it can introduce a world of hurt into your life, the likes of which you've never seen before.

### **Everyday Temptations**

Everything mentioned up to this point are the far extremes. Even though significant numbers of people, indicated by the statistics above, fall prey to the worst of the worst in terms of Internet and social media usage not every one will. The likelihood is that if you're reading this chapter in this book that you are conscientious enough about your

soul that you might not necessarily fall prey to the worst of the worst. However, while there are things that may be more prevalent in the world than for New Testament Christians, there are some dangers that exist in social media usage that are common among all men.

First is the temptation to waste inordinate amounts of time on social media. Research reported by Social Media Today indicates that the average person spends nearly two hours on social media everyday and teens now spend an astonishingly nine hours a day on social platforms ([www.socialmediatoday.com](http://www.socialmediatoday.com)). I want to stop and put that into perspective. Over the course of their lives people are spending multiple years on social media, on average five years and four months and those numbers are progressively getting worse by the day. People are wasting time at work, forfeiting time with their families, and sacrificing face to face interaction with friends, family, and others all for the sake of spending time on social media.

What's more is that social media is designed for just that. Multiple stories read in research for this chapter indicate that Facebook was designed and is continually altered with the purpose of making the platform more addictive. In an interview with Sean Parker, an early Facebook contributor, investor, and its first president, he was quoted as saying, "The thought process was all about, 'How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?' And that means that we need to sort of give you a little dopamine hit every once in a while, because someone liked or commented on a photo or a post or whatever, and that's going to get you to contribute more content, and that's going to get you more likes and comments. It's a social validation feedback loop... You're exploiting a vulnerability in human psychology"

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(www.slate.com). None of that should be surprising. Any business is going to design their product to increase demand as much as possible. However, this admission should be eye opening as a person examines their use of social media on a daily basis.

Time is a precious commodity because you only get so much of it, and once it's gone you can never get it back. There are so many things that God has told His people to do with their time, while taking some leisure time isn't wrong, allowing such idle things as social media to consume significant portions of your time to the neglect of much more grave matters is extremely dangerous. Think of a few verses that give warning as to how you should view time:

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:15-17).

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time (Colossians 4:5).

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalm 90:10-12).

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an

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handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity (Psalm 39:4-5).

Social media isn't inherently sinful, but you've got to be extremely careful to not allow it to consume you to the point that it becomes an addiction. Time is precious and you shouldn't waste too much of it on social media platforms.

Second is the temptation to arrogantly promote one's self. Social media has given the common person something that they have never had before – a public voice. In times past a person really had to have a degree of fame, popularity, or power to have a public voice or be thrust into the public eye. However, social media has given people the ability to become instant celebrities. Think about the number of people who have become celebrities because of nothing more than their social media identity. The hope for that instant celebrity or for their fifteen minutes of fame have driven people to promote themselves to the point that it becomes sickening.

Sadly, Christians aren't immune from this. Some want to be known as movers and shakers in the kingdom and because of that tirelessly document everything they do, everywhere they go, everything they say, things that others say about them, etc. It goes beyond the simple reporting of good news about conversions, church growth, or spiritual growth that can be done in good taste and with humility. With some it goes to the point of arrogance and even an exaggeration of the truth all for the shameless pursuit of a name.

There are some pretty obvious implications in terms of what the Bible teaches when you're talking about a subject like this. Think of a few scriptures that teach us the value of humility in everything we say and everything we do:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Peter 5:5-6).

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God (Micah 6:8).

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Romans 12:3).

Then there is this conversation that Jesus had with His disciples on one occasion. They came asking “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” In response Jesus called a little child unto Him and said,

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-4).

Some are shamelessly pursuing greatness while God has called us to be humble. If a person doesn’t use extreme caution in their use of social media they will be tempted to try and increase favorable perception of themselves out of pure pride. Humility should drive our social media identity as much as it drives our true identity.

Third is the temptation to allow the anonymity of the keyboard to impact kind and compassionate interaction with others on social media. You've practically come to expect it. Log on to Facebook, Twitter, or any other number of social media platforms and within seconds you will come across a flurry of arrogant, mean spirited, and down right hateful comments that will turn your stomach. Find a post that expresses an opinion or makes a statement, factual or otherwise, about anything political, religious, or social and you'll probably find responses that number into the dozens, hundreds, or even thousands where opinionated people feel their personal perspective is more valid than the next and that the world will come to an end if they don't express it. Even New Testament Christians fight with each other over matters such as child-rearing decisions and education choices, and there are preachers petty enough to attack other preachers simply over sermon style or other insignificant matters. It is shameful the way some people choose to treat one another behind the shield of a keyboard, typing things they likely would never say to a person's face.

One of the most serious problems society is currently facing is the onslaught of cyber bullying and the statistics are alarming. Guard Child reports that more than half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, about the same number have engaged in cyber bullying, and of those admitted that they had been bullied eighty-seven percent said it had happened on Facebook and nineteen percent said it had happened on Twitter ([www.guardchild.com](http://www.guardchild.com)). This type of activity has gotten out of control and has lead to a significant increase in violence and teen suicide.

However, adults are just as guilty, if not more so, of mistreating one another on social media. Social media has



given the common man a voice and with that it has given him the idea that he has the right to say whatever he wants regardless of how petty, mean-spirited, or hate-filled it may be. The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution is often cited as justification for what is said; but it's important to point out that the first amendment only gives a person the legal right to say whatever they want without fear of prosecution by civil authority. That first amendment doesn't give a person the moral right to say whatever they want and it doesn't make a person immune from certain other consequences for what they may say.

The Bible gives some pretty blatant warnings regarding the way that a person is to communicate. The Bible speaks of it from the perspective of how a person is to speak, but the same principle would apply to any form of communication including online communication. Consider just a few scriptures written in that context:

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:5-8).

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place

to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Ephesians 4:25-31).

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (Colossians 4:6).

Ultimately this matter should be settled with a simple understanding of the Golden Rule. Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). It is shameful the way that some people choose to speak to or about others on social media simply because they can do it from a distance and not worry about being confronted about their harassment to their face, and this is particularly true when it comes to God’s people. Christians can and should do better because if we can’t treat others any differently than the world then our eternal fate will be just like the world’s.

There are other significant temptations that society faces from its usage of social media but these are some that, from my observation, are everyday matters that need to be guarded against. Christian, remember that you are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

### **Six Rules For Posting On Social Media**

I'm going to be brutally honest. I've lost respect for people based on what they've posted on social media. There are preachers I wouldn't invite to speak or even walk across the road to hear because of what they've posted on social media. There are Christians that I no longer trust based on what they've posted on social media. There are people I've known for years that I'm ashamed of because of what they've posted on social media. You come to expect certain things from certain people. People in the world are going to act like people of the world, after all. But it should be different for Christians. So before a person chooses to post a comment, publicize an opinion, or attack a person based on their opinion there are six questions that should be asked

First, is it true? Did you know that not every meme, GIF, or linked "news" story is true? We live in a world where anybody of any intellectual level or degree of honesty can build a website, Photoshop a picture, or attribute a false quote to a reputable person. That's not to say that everything you see online is false, but a lot of it isn't true. As Christians we should be concerned with reflecting truth at all times, and that means fact-checking, researching, and making sure that anytime we click "post" that what is posted is as accurate as it can possibly be, or don't post it at all.

Second, is it honorable? People used to be concerned with being honorable. They wanted to be respected, decent, and have a good reputation. Those were qualities more valuable than any amount of money, power, or possession. But among many things included in being an honorable person is the need to treat one another in an honorable way. That's at the basis of the above quoted Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). It needs to be asked, "what does this post or comment say about

me?” That will help determine whether or not it is honorable.

Third, is it just? Or another way to ask this is, “is it fair?” You come to some conclusion about something or someone. You make a judgment or call someone else’s judgment into question. You choose to tell someone they are wrong or call their integrity into questions. Is it fair for you to have done so? For what reason or with what rationale have you based your assessment? Comments on social media often assume the worst in each other, but the Bible says that love dictates that we assume the best, at least until proven otherwise (1 Corinthians 13:5). The way people treat each other ought to be a big deal. Sadly for many it just isn’t anymore. People gripe, complain, and air every frustration that comes into their minds; but never once do they stop to ask themselves if what they think or say is just.

Fourth, is it pure? Impure comments come from impure thoughts that can only originate in impure minds. Jesus said that “the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile a man” (Matthew 15:18). What a person chooses to say on social media is a reflection of their heart. A person may excuse their behavior by saying that no one can judge their heart, but they put their heart on full display by what they post. Many times we associate impurity just with things of a sexual nature, but impurity is much broader than that. Jesus went on to associate “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” with impurity (Matthew 15:19). Pure hearts produce pure thoughts that produce pure things. What about what you’re posting? Is it pure?

Fifth, is it lovely? The gospel is called “glad tidings of good things” because it reflects beautiful truths (Romans 10:15). The things that people choose to say can be just as

lovely when they make sure they reflect beautiful truths. Those are things that encourage, build up, and strengthen. Not things that destroy, tear down, and weaken. Paul put it this way: “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19). But so much of what is posted doesn’t reflect beautiful truths. Instead much of what’s posted is just plain ugly. Is what you’re posting lovely?

Sixth, is it of good report? If something is not of good report then the only other possibility is that it’s evil. Things that are of good report are productive. They are words of kindness and compassion. Things that are of good report will never be hateful or spoken in anger. They will reflect godly ambition and eternal well-being. It needs to be asked whether what is posted is something that a person would want God to read. Would they be happy for Him to see it or would they be ashamed? All things are open to His sight. He knows every comment posted, every word said, and every thought that crosses the mind. I’ve got a feeling that so much of what God sees posted on social media is so evil that it makes Him weep. So is what you’re posting of good report?

You’ve probably figured out by now that these aren’t just six rules I’ve developed. These are six principles developed from Paul’s statement in Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

What you post online is a reflection of your heart, so if you will simply saturate your heart with things that are true, honorable,

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just, pure, lovely, and of good report then what comes out of your heart will be these things as well.

### **Conclusion**

Social media can be such a good thing. The gospel can be spread, hearts can be touched, souls can be reached, brethren can be encouraged, and the church can be built up when Christians choose to utilize social media to the glory of God. It, like many other tools in this world, has a great deal of potential for good if we would choose to use it that way.

However, when people don't give careful consideration to how they use social media it can turn the internet into an "inmates running the asylum" type of disaster. Let's not fall prey to these temptations common to all men. Let's remember what it is, what we can do with it, what limitations we should put into place; guard our hearts, our eyes, and our minds, and do better to the glory of God.

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**I**t is an honor to be invited to speak on this lectureship. The East Hill church is known far and wide for its faithfulness and its contribution to the cause of Christ. The assignment for this lecture is: Temptations of the Man and Father. It should be understood that the temptations we will discuss in this lecture are not exclusive to men. We are all tempted, but we are not all tempted by the same things. James gives us the anatomy of sin,

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 1:14-15).

Notice that every person is drawn away of his own lust. Since there are some things for which one may not lust, they would not be a source of temptation. But, every person has basic needs and desires, and these are a source of temptation for each one. For some, the temptations will be stronger than for others.

There may be many temptations that one could cite, but we will notice only a few.

### **The Temptation To Fornicate**

One temptation of a man and father is the sin of fornication. God has created us and instilled within us certain needs and desires. One of those is the desire and the need for sexual intimacy. This is used by Satan to tempt one to fulfill such a need in an illegitimate way. One definition of the word “fornication” is “illicit sexual intercourse; 1a) adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.; 1b) sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev. 18; 1c) sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman; Mark 10:11-12” (Theological Dictionary of New Testament; 6:579, 918). We might say that fornication is the act of sexual intimacy outside the boundary of a legitimate marriage. It is important to note that not all marriages are legitimate. A legitimate marriage is one wherein God joins the man and the woman together. Jesus said, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). Those who can expect God to join them together are those who have never been married before, who have suffered the loss of a spouse through death, or who has divorced their spouse because the spouse was guilty of fornication. The word fornication is an “umbrella” word, covering all illicit sexual conduct such as adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality. It is obvious that this temptation is not exclusive to men as the sin is not committed alone. But, it is a temptation that seems to be especially susceptible to men. We know that men and women think differently about sexual intimacy. It is suggested that men are influenced toward the act of sex by sight and the desire for pleasure. Women tend to be influenced by the desire for emotional intimacy. Certainly, there are exceptions to these stated suggestions. The sin of fornication has been a problem



for mankind for a long time. But, the sexually permissive society in which we are now living makes this consideration of the temptation important. While any sin is sufficient to cost one the loss of the soul, some sins are seen to be worse than others. Fornication is one such sin. According to the teaching of Jesus on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, fornication is the only sin which allows one to divorce his spouse, who commits fornication, and remarry without the remarriage resulting in the sin of adultery (Matthew 19:9). Paul told the Corinthians,

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Whatever one may think about the meaning of the passage, it shows that fornication is a unique sin. It is no wonder that Paul would say to flee from it. Jesus warned of committing the sin of fornication in one's heart by looking on a woman to lust after her (Matthew 5:28). Job knew the problem of such when he said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes: why then should I think upon a maid" (Job 31:1). Men must be especially careful not to let Satan in the door through the temptation to commit fornication, either literally or in the mind. Pornography opens the door for such temptation. The immodest apparel of our day opens the door for the sin of fornication. Let us resolve that we will not allow Satan in the door by any means.

### **The Temptation To Dominate**

A second temptation faced by a man and a father is to be a dictator in his home. According to God's wisdom, the

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husband is the head of the home. Paul wrote,

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,  
as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the  
wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and  
He is the Saviour of the body (Ephesians 5:22-23).

We know that this divine arrangement for the functioning of the home is not because of any inherent superiority of the man over the woman. Both the man and the woman are created in the image of God according to Genesis 1:27,

So God created man in His image, in the image  
of God created He him; male and female created  
He them.

Likewise, the Godhead is made up of three divine persons who are equal. Yet, Paul said that God is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). This did not mean that God (the Father) is superior to the Son. It was a statement showing function. This divine arrangement of the husband being the head of the wife is for the functioning in the home; decisions have to be made and when there is an impasse in what to do, someone has to have the final say. In the case of the home, it is the husband who carries this burden. However, the way in which the husband exercises his authority as head of the home is to after the example of how Christ exercises His authority over the church. Paul wrote,

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as  
Christ is the head of the church: and He is the  
Saviour of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

Paul went on to say to husbands, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it...” (Ephesians 5:25). Notice the phrase, “even as.” This

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sets the pattern for how the husband exercises his authority over the home. It is to be a loving, sacrificing authority. Peter wrote,

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Therefore, the man in the home exercises his authority with love and care for his wife and their children. This does not mean that every decision he makes will be pleasing to his family, but, that he makes those decisions with the best interest of the family at heart. Unfortunately, some men think that their authority means that they can be dictators in their home. Such a one dominates the lives of all who are in the home. He demands to be served without consideration of how he may serve. Every decision is made with the best interest of the man and not that of his family. It is no badge of honor for the family to cower in terror when the man of the house comes home. It is not a good thing for the members of a family to wait in wonder as to the mood of the husband and father when he comes home. A man can become “drunk” on his authority and pervert the intended nature of the home. When a man so behaves, he has allowed Satan to lure him into the temptation to dominate. A man suffers nothing by making decisions with consideration for his wife and children. He loses nothing by allowing his family to have what they want. Let us resolve to lead our homes like Christ leads the church. Does He not allow us some freedom in how we carry out some of His commands?

### **The Temptation To Abdicate**

A third temptation the man and father faces is to abdicate his intended role as head of the family. The verses cited under the previous point can be disobeyed by a man by going to the other extreme of abdicating his role as head of the family. He may allow his wife to make all the decisions. This is not the same thing as asking the wife's, or the children's opinion, and then making a decision that agrees with those opinions. It is not the same thing as a husband trying to lead his family, but seeing the wife, and or the children rebel against such leadership. To abdicate is simply to allow all decisions to be made by the wife or children. All of us could cite instances where we have seen the children become the rulers of the home. Both parents abdicate their role of authority as parents and allow the children to dominate them. A man may justify his giving in to this temptation on the basis of love; that he does not want to disappoint his family so he lets them have their way. Or, a man may become so busy with his career or his hobbies that he lets the wife become the head of the home by default. Decisions have to be made. And, if the husband, and father, is not going to make them, the wife must. Each of us has our own strengths and weaknesses. A man's personality may be more passive, but nonetheless, he is responsible for taking the leadership in the home. Admittedly, the wife can help with this. But, whether she does so, or not, he is the one whom God has given the responsibility for directing his home. Ideally, the husband and wife should work together as a unified team in living life. Each one should supplement the others weaknesses with his, or her, strengths. A wife might have more formal education and thus be better equipped to help the children with their school work. But, that should not preclude the husband's interest in his children's education.

Would that every man could say as did Joshua, "...but, as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15b).

### **The Temptation To Accumulate**

A fourth temptation of the man and father is to try to accumulate the material things of this world to the neglect of the soul. We know of the tragedy of absentee fathers in our society today. But, one does not have to abandon the home to be an absentee father. A man may eat most of his meals at home, and sleep at home, yet be an absentee husband and father in the lives of his family. Jesus gave us a key to life when He answered the temptation of Satan to turn stones into bread, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Jesus would later repeat that same principle when He said,

Take heed; and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

Every godly man wants to provide for his family. To fail to do so is sin.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

Later, in that same epistle, Paul wrote,

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction, and perdition (1 Timothy 6:9).

One of those temptations is the abdicating of the man's role in the home as a father so he can provide more of this world's

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goods for his family. But, he is not only to be the primary breadwinner; he is to be the leader of his home. No man can claim success as a leader of his home, if he does not do all he can to lead his family to heaven. While we want to provide for our families the best that we can, we have failed to provide the best things if we neglect the spiritual for the material. How often do the things of this world take priority over the things of the world to come? One who leaves his family with a legacy of godly service and the hope of heaven has left them far richer than if he were able to leave them all the riches of this world. Let us resolve that whatever we may be blessed by God to accumulate of this world's goods, the greatest thing we will leave our children is the memory of life lived for God so as to go to Heaven.

### **The Temptation To Accommodate**

A fifth temptation of the man and father is to accommodate the world's moral standards. We are warned, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Again, we are admonished by Paul,

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).

Paul warned the Philippian church of some,

(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Philippians 3:18-19).

As the influences of the media infiltrate the minds of the occupants of the home, the temptation is to accommodate our lives to the world. The images of immodest apparel and the practice of promiscuity are thrown on the canvass of our minds through the internet, television and movies. Husbands and fathers may be unwittingly influence to accommodate these standards of dress and conduct as being the proper things to do. How many fathers, and mothers, have justified the prom on the basis that it is an important event in the lives of their children who are passing through the junior and senior years of high school? How many condone the immodesty of some sports uniforms, cheerleaders outfits, and dance team outfits? More than a few fathers have compromised on moral issues for the sake of the happiness of their children. No one wants their child to be an outcast among his peers. But, neither should we want them to be cast into the lake of fire. Better to be an outcast here on earth than to be cast out at the judgment bar of God. Jesus prayed for His disciples that were in the world, to not be of the world (John 17:15). Let us resolve that we will not allow our minds to be corrupted through the influence of the world.

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Temptations Of The Man And Father

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**T**he first few words of the old hymn, Farther Along entered my mind the more our subject was considered. Those first three words of that hymn, “Tempted **AND** tried...” (emphasis mine-JA), matches perfectly as we discuss “Temptations in the church.” There are trials of life as in everyday challenges and occurrences as the faithful. Allow James to speak,

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

Also, there are the trials and temptations that Satan brings our way to detour us from faithfulness. He is called “the tempter” (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).

In a word study of “temptation,” the translation of the word depends on the context. Some later translations will place the word “trials” instead of temptation as the word temptation has two meanings. First, there are trials as in a

testing of one's faith due to the circumstances of life, but yet are used with a purpose that is beneficial. A second meaning is trials or temptations that the tempter, Satan, uses to pull us away from God. The choice to leave God is due to our carelessness and disobedience (Vine's online).

Thus, our subject at hand, "Temptations in the church" is quite appropriate. As Christians, we have trials before us and temptations ahead of us. We must face both with faith and to keep in mind that old tempter is after us as in the writings of Peter, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). We must always be on guard.

With our study, let us look at the life of Christ, the lives of our brethren that have gone before and the lessons for us today in dealing with the temptations and trials before us.

**The Body Is Tempted And Tried,  
As The Head Was Tempted And Tried**  
Satan pursued our Lord and tempted Him to sin.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and

in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him (Matthew 4:1-11).

With Jesus hungry, Satan used a physical need of Jesus and tempted Him to make bread from stones to see if Jesus would respond to his command. He told Christ to cast Himself down and the angels would lift Him up. It is interesting that Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Christ which belonged to Christ anyway as one of the Godhead (Daniel 4:17; Colossians 1:15-20). Nevertheless, Satan tempted Christ in areas he perceived as weakness and Jesus withstood Satan continually. We are reminded, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The Head knows what His body, the church is facing and He knows our enemy.

There were trials and troubles before our Lord as we read, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations” (Luke 22:28). The context conveys the word “trials” or the troubles Jesus is facing and He speaks of His suffering to come (Luke 22:15). We also read of Christ with His apostles at the Passover meal; the moment also referred as His last supper with His apostles. Christ speaks

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of remembering His death in partaking of the Lord's Supper and also speaks of one that will betray Him and tells Peter he would deny Him. Oh, the trials and suffering facing our Lord the night before His death! "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). To succor is "to come to the aid..." (Vine's online). Although Christ was tested, He is able to give aid as one Who redeemed us (1 Peter 1:18-19); Who serves as our Mediator in heaven (1 Timothy 2:5) and Who is our Intercessor (Hebrews 7:25).

We remember the teaching of Jesus that we as servants are not greater than our Lord (John 15:20). Yes, our Savior, the Head of His church (Ephesians 1:22-23), which is His body (Colossians 1:18), the church of which comprises the saved (Acts 2:47), faced the same temptations and trials as we. What a blessing during these times that we are able to "...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

### **The Body Is Tempted And Tried, As Our Fellow Servants Were Tempted And Tried**

While studying the Scriptures, I find the need occasionally to remind myself that I am reading about fellow human beings, with the exception being Christ who was God in the flesh (Matthew 1:21-23; John 1:1, 14).

Time does not permit thorough research of each epistle to the churches and their temptations and trials as the depth of study would be quite numerous. The purpose of the letters to the churches and to individuals was either to warn them to turn from sinful behavior (to which they succumbed through the temptations of Satan) or to encourage them to press onward in faith and endure the trials before them. They, too, were

“tempted and tried.” However, we can consider some of the temptations of the tempter among our brethren of days past and our lessons today.

***Lying Instead Of Truth***

Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out (Acts 5:9).

The tragic deaths of Ananias and Sapphira stemmed from the temptation of Satan as written in Acts 5:3,

But, Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

We see the old tempter, the father of lies (John 8:44) at work. Parallel with this is the greed or covetousness in the lives of Ananias and Sapphira and how these sins will condemn our souls (Galatians 5:19-21). The temptation and concession to lie is great and will lead us away from truth, destroy trust, and attack reputations.

***Looking Instead Of Loving***

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Corinthians 7:5).

Our context to “avoid fornication” (1 Corinthians 7:2) pleads for husband and wife to continue in their marriage and with mutual consent keeping their eyes on their faith to endure.

How many marriages have been destroyed as one partner or both succumbed unto temptation in being with another person? Satan will tempt and attack one's self-control and this has brought many couples into unfaithfulness toward one another and toward God. Many homes have been destroyed by those who are looking elsewhere instead of loving the one to whom they are married.

***Confidence Instead Of Compassion***

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).

Sandwich this teaching between the command of not desiring vain or empty glory (Galatians 5:26) and Galatians 6:3, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Would not Satan take the arrogance of God-given ability to drive a wedge among brothers and sisters in the Lord? Indeed. Let us recall 1 Corinthians 12-14 and the need of love in dealing with the misuse of spiritual gifts in the early church. It must be noted we are not comparing the ability of one today to the miraculous spiritual gifts in the early church, but rather the temptation Satan brings forth to misuse them.

***Afflictions Instead Of Approach***

For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain (1 Thessalonians 3:5).

Paul was concerned of the faith of these brethren as noted in verse two of this same text. He was pleased to know they

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were well as Timothy brought to Paul a good report of their faith and love. Let us always "...stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 3:8) and stand with the full armor of God ready for the battles and temptations against our faith (Ephesians 6:11-18). The result is a choice and approach resulting in lives without focus. We allow life to "live us" rather than living our lives by "...the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

***Greed Instead Of Giving***

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

The pattern of these texts is evident as Satan will bring forth the temptation and then lays a snare to entrap. The trap traps man into further destruction thus, he errs from the faith and his sorrows increase. When man gives into this temptation, he changes his Master from the Lord to riches (Matthew 6:24) and is deceived by his riches (Mark 4:19), which moves him from his faith. The warnings of Jesus ring true, "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

Second, let us be encouraged and lifted by the endurance of temptation by trial. Let us think of the words of Paul as he talked with the elders of the church at Ephesus.

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into

## Temptations In The Church

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Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews (Acts 20:18-19).

From the outset, Paul acknowledges the setbacks that were before him and what he endured, yet he pressed onward in faith exhorting these good brethren by commending them "...to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). No doubt, it was the word of God that strengthened Paul and built his endurance to withstand the temptations/trials before him.

Paul expressed to the Galatian brethren how the trial or challenge of his health (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) was not brought against him in hindering the gospel. "And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (Galatians 4:14). The exact case of Paul's "thorn in the flesh," an ailment of some type, has long been speculated. However, the encouragement and teaching from this is that Paul did not allow this hindrance or problem to cease his preaching of the gospel.

Whether we face temptations such as lying, unfaithfulness, self-centeredness, lack of focus, or greed or the trials of either spiritual or physical hindrance, we are able to endure and provided for us are the great assurances of our Lord:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am

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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 (James 1:12-14).

### **The Body Is Tempted And Tried, And The Strength To Overcome Is Available**

A more thorough discussion is in this volume concerning how to survive temptation. The following is to complement our discussion for those that may only hear this lesson.

Was it not the apostle Peter to whom the Lord said that Satan desired to have him "... that he may sift [him] as wheat" (Luke 22:31)? Peter denied our Lord and we read of Peter's impetuous manner rising on occasion (John 18:10; 21:3). It's been my "unofficial Poll taking" when asking fellow Christians to compare themselves to a character in the New Testament that Peter is the one most chosen. It stands to reason that Peter, like us, was human and he faced his temptations and trials in life. Yet, on the day of Pentecost, he stood with the eleven and proclaimed the gospel (Acts 2) and he penned two of the most practical books in the New Testament. Although penned by inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the writings of Peter are practical for application as one reads. It is as if the experience of Peter is also speaking.

With this brought forth, let us look closely at the words of Peter that present a plan to endure the temptations and trials that come our way.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking

whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you (1 Peter 5:6-10).

***Allow Him To Perfect You***

Perfect is defined as “mending nets” (Mark 1:19) or “setting a broken bone” (Hunter, 158) and this addresses a part that is lacking or in need. In other words, an area that needs strengthened. Whether we are tempted by Satan or suffer a temptation by trial, we need strength to endure and God is able to perfect us. The Hebrew writer so aptly says,

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God (Hebrews 5:14—6:1).

***Allow Him To Stablish You***

The word stablish (or our use today, establish) means “to fix, to make fast, to set,” (Vine’s) as when concrete sets. Let us remain on the solid foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 16:18). We are built on Him or as in the chorus of that old hymn: “Mine’s on the rock that forever shall stand; Jesus the Rock of Ages.”

***Allow Him To Strengthen You***

Allow Him ‘to make strong,’ and this suggests the

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strengthening that comes to steel, or iron, when it is heated with fire and suddenly cooled, thus “tempering” it and giving it much greater hardness and strength. The onset of the fires of persecution would harden and strengthen the faith of many” (Coffman online).

One cannot help but see the beauty of inspiration in the placement of this word, strengthen. As God supplies the part which is lacking and establishes us in the idea and power of concrete, we are set to endure. When these temptations and/or trials come our way and “heat us up,” we develop hardening and come back stronger.

***Allow Him To Settle You***

The thought of “laying a foundation” used metaphorically (Vine’s) is brought forth. This word emphasizes building on things just mentioned as a place to stand. God also proved us the surplus from which to draw things needed in enduring temptations and trials.

How grateful God is able to perfect, establish, strengthen and settle us as we press onward with such great assurance.

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 ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 2:9).

**Conclusion**

The trials before us perfect and strengthen our faith as we endure. We noted this from our Savior, our fellow servants

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and the scripture that guides and strengthens.

Let's embrace the assurance of our Lord to His church:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience,  
I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation,  
which shall come upon all the world, to try them  
that dwell upon the earth (Revelation 3:10).

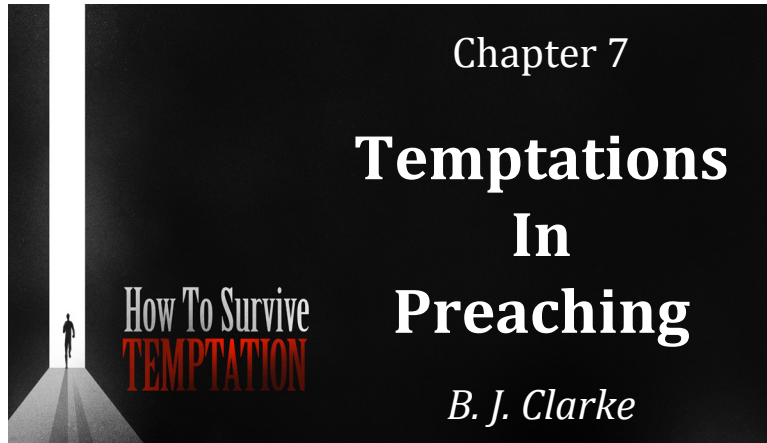
Keep your church safe, O Savior and allow us to rest on your words,

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from  
evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and  
the glory, for ever. Amen (Matthew 6:13).

Through God's grace and provisions, let us be faithful unto death or rejoice, as in the old hymn, "when we see Jesus coming in glory."

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### **Introduction**

**N**o accountable human being is exempt from temptation, and the preacher is a human being. Satan is walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), and he wants to devour as many souls as possible. Yet, make no mistake about it—since the gospel is God’s power to save (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:21), Satan would take special delight in destroying all of the heralds of this gospel message. He knows the vulnerabilities of the preacher and will target them accordingly. We must not be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). What are some of the temptations we face as preachers?

### **To Forget Our Real Motivation In Preaching**

If we are not careful, we might forget the reasons we do what we do in preaching. Some preachers are tempted to preach for self-centered reasons (Philippians 1:15-16). We must not give in to the temptation to preach ourselves rather than Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:5). It will help us to avoid

this temptation if we remember the Biblical motivations for preaching.

1. We should preach **to turn men from vanities to the living God** (Acts 14:15). We have a message of hope for those who are living in emptiness. As the song says, “There is a God! He is alive! In Him we live and we survive!” Our task in preaching is to draw men to the living God (John 6:44-45).

2. We should preach in order **to bring glad tidings of good things to our hearers** (Romans 10:15). There is enough bad news in the world. The Gospel is good news and it is our privilege and responsibility to spread the glad tidings that a Savior came into this world to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

3. We should preach in order **to save them that believe** (1 Corinthians 1:21). To convince people that they need to be saved we must first preach to them the fact that they are lost and in need of salvation. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Yet, it pleased God to reveal a message of salvation through preaching (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

4. We should preach in order **to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus** (Colossians 1:28). The purpose of preaching is to prepare ourselves, and those who hear us, for the time when Christ will examine our lives upon the Day of Judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul affirmed that he taught and warned every man in an attempt to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28).

The above reasons for preaching are Divinely ordained; we must not allow the temptation of self-promotion to lead us astray from God’s reasons for preaching.

### **To Replace The Divine Message With A Human Message**

Preachers are often tempted to replace God’s message with a human message of their own devising. A review of

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God's instructions concerning the content of our preaching will help us to avoid the temptation to substitute something cheap for something so priceless.

1. We should preach **the Gospel**. Jesus ordered His apostles to "Go preach the gospel..." (Mark 16:15). The book of Acts records how they "preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:25). On their missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas came into the region around Lystra and Derbe "and there they preached the gospel" (Acts 14:7, 21). After the Macedonian call, Luke explains that he and the other missionaries understood "that the Lord had called for us to preach the gospel unto them" (Acts 16:10).

2. We should preach **the Word of God** (Acts 18:28). The very seed of the kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). The book of Acts clearly indicates that this Word is what we are to sow into the hearts of our hearers. Philip's sermon to the eunuch was rooted in "scripture" (Acts 8:35). Those who were scattered from Jerusalem because of persecution traveled into various places "preaching the word" (Acts 11:19). As Paul and Barnabas began their missionary journey, they came to Salamis and "preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews" (Acts 13:5). In the city of Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were busy "teaching and preaching the word of the Lord" (Acts 15:35). In every city that they visited they "preached the word of the Lord" (Acts 15:36). Furthermore, the "word of God was preached of Paul at Berea" (Acts 17:13) and Apollos was known for "shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:28).

3. We should preach **Jesus Christ**. Even after being beaten, the apostles ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42). In the city of Samaria, Philip preached "Christ" (Acts 8:5) and in the wilderness he preached "Jesus" unto

the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:35). Immediately after his conversion Saul of Tarsus “preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). Some men from Cyprus and Cyrene came to Antioch and “spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20). Paul told the Thessalonians, “this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:3). Later, in Athens, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers ridiculed Paul “because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). Some of the vagabond Jews of Ephesus understood that it was Jesus whom Paul was preaching (Acts 19:13). Paul himself referred to his preaching as “the preaching of Jesus Christ” (Romans 16:25). He told the Corinthians, “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2) and in his second epistle to them he wrote: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2 Corinthians 4:5). Hence, our preaching should be Christ-centered!

4. We should preach **the kingdom of God**. Luke tells us that not only was Philip preaching Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5), he was also preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12). Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that he had gone among them “preaching the kingdom of God” (Acts 20:25). Later, when Paul was under house arrest, “he received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence” (Acts 28:31). The role of a preacher is to preach to men and women about their opportunity and need to enter into the kingdom of heaven by being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). The preacher must make sure that men and women understand the kingdom’s time of establishment, its terms of entrance, the treasures of enrollment into that kingdom, and the torment of being excluded from it.



5. We should preach **peace by Jesus Christ**. At the household of Cornelius, Peter explained that he and other preachers had been sent into all the world, “preaching peace by Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:36). The preacher must remember that he is privileged to herald a message of peace in a world of turmoil. What a joy it is to preach that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1-2)!

6. We should preach **the forgiveness of sins through Christ**. Of course, the reason we have peace with God through Christ is because we have the forgiveness of sins through Christ. The preacher must preach that all have sinned (Romans 3:23), and then hasten to explain that forgiveness of sins is available through Christ (Acts 13:38).

7. We should preach **the unsearchable riches of Christ**. The majority of our hearers will not be among the wealthiest people in the world, monetarily speaking. However, the joy of preaching is that we get to proclaim that Christ became poor so that we might be spiritually rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). Paul viewed his preaching to the Gentiles as preaching “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8). The role of the preacher is to explain how men and women can become joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

### **To Limit The Scope Of Our Preaching**

Some preachers give in to the temptation to teach and preach the gospel only to a certain clientele—to a certain race, to a certain socioeconomic status. This author has heard more than one sad story about how certain churches refused to reach out to certain communities because the residents there were not upper class enough, or white enough, or educated enough, etc. To avoid this temptation we must review the scope of the Great Commission.

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1. We should preach **to every creature**. We sometimes sing, “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight; Jesus loves the little children of the world.” These multi-colored children grow up and become adults—adults who are sinners in need of the Gospel. Jesus loves the adults of the world—no matter what color they are, and no matter the nation from whence they come. Therefore, we must preach the Word to “every creature” (Mark 16:15) of “all nations” (Matthew 28:19). When the believers in Jerusalem were scattered because of persecution “they went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). After baptizing the eunuch, Philip was caught away by the Holy Spirit and placed in Azotus. Passing through there “he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). After baptizing the Gentile, Cornelius, in water, Peter returned to Jerusalem where those of the circumcision, who thought the Gospel was for Jews only, confronted him. After Peter rehearsed how the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles like He did on the apostles at the beginning (Pentecost), the Gentiles held their peace and glorified God that the Gentiles also had been granted the opportunity to enjoy eternal life. The preacher must remember that the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

2. We should preach **to the church**. The preacher must never forget that there are two parts to fulfilling the Great Commission. The first part is to go, teach and baptize (Matthew 28:19). The second part is to teach those who have been baptized to observe all things that Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:20). Barnabas and Paul spent an entire year with the church at Antioch “and taught much people” (Acts 11:26). Paul and Barnabas both thought so much of the importance of

the second part of the great commission that they scheduled it into their missionary journeys (Acts 15:36; 20:7-9, 17-32).

In contrast, too many churches today are lopsided in their emphasis. Some greatly emphasize the first part of the great commission, to the neglect of the second part. Others emphasize the second part but fail to emphasize the first part. For true church growth to occur we must preach both to the alien sinner and to the new convert!

### **To Become Too Timid In Our Preaching**

The new convert, Saul of Tarsus, was not timid in his preaching (Acts 9:27). In fact, he spoke so boldly that some went about to slay him (Acts 9:29). Paul and Barnabas “waxed bold” (Acts 13:46) in their preaching to the Jews, wherever they went (Acts 14:3).

Paul exhorted Timothy to “war a good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18) and to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). To preach boldly is not equivalent to being ugly. It is to preach without fear, favor, or compromise. After writing a number of inspired teachings to Timothy, Paul then exhorted him, “These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth...” (1 Timothy 4:11-12). In his correspondence to Titus, Paul said, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Titus 2:15). An elder once ridiculed a Gospel preacher with the following words: “People in this county are calling you the Pope because you preach the Bible as if you are right and everyone else is wrong.” Dear reader, as long as we know we are preaching the truth, and as long as we are preaching it in the right spirit, we cannot preach it half-heartedly, as if it may or may not be true. We must preach it authoritatively because, if it is Scripture that we are preaching, it is embedded with the authority of God!

Paul told Timothy,

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality (1 Timothy 5:21).

The role of the preacher is to preach the whole truth to the whole congregation, even if it involves rebuking elders who sin, or his own family. God is not a respecter of persons and preachers must not be either.

Paul instructed Timothy,

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (2 Timothy 1:8).

Paul was a wonderful example to Timothy in this department, for Paul himself wrote,

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12).

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16) and the preacher must not be ashamed of Jesus or of His words; otherwise, Jesus will be ashamed of him on the Day of Judgment (Mark 8:38).

We should preach **reprovingly**. Paul told Timothy that a part of preaching the Word was to reprove (2 Timothy 4:2). This requires the preacher to preach the Word in order to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the

shame of the person convicted. Paul did not enjoy doing so but he had to shame the Corinthians in his epistle unto them (1 Corinthians 6:5; 15:34). The preacher should not shame the brethren every time he gets up in the pulpit, but there are occasions when it is needed.

We should preach **admonishingly**. Paul also told Timothy to “rebuke” the brethren (2 Timothy 4:2). The original meaning carries with it the idea of censuring or admonishing, even severely at times. Concerning some of the false teachers of his day, Paul told Titus to “rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13). Again, this is never pleasant, but is sometimes necessary, especially if the outcome is that they become sound in the faith!

### **To Preach Without Doctrinal Accuracy**

It is not enough to preach boldly. Apollos preached boldly in the synagogue—but he was in error and Aquila and Priscilla had to take him aside and show him the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:25-26). Paul was so concerned about doctrinal accuracy that he charged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to see to it that they teach “no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3). The Gospel preacher must fight for the truth rather than capitulate to error.

Paul encouraged Timothy to nourish the brethren with “good doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:6). In order to do this, Timothy would need to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (1 Timothy 4:13). He would need to take heed unto himself and the doctrine (teaching) for in so doing he would save both himself and his hearers (1 Timothy 4:16). The role of the preacher is, among other things, to exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2) and to make sure

that his doctrine (teaching) is not corrupt (Titus 2:7).

Paul declared that if any man taught otherwise than the wholesome doctrine Paul had written to Timothy, such a man “is proud, knowing nothing” (1 Timothy 6:3-5). To preach humbly is to preach God’s message without addition or subtraction. Man is never more arrogant than when he presumes to tamper with God’s Word! It is an awesome privilege to preach but also an awesome responsibility (James 3:1-2). We must humbly and faithfully carry out our task. The preacher must “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) and speak the things “which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). He must be known for “sound speech, that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:8). The word translated “sound” is from a Greek word which means “healthy or healthful.” Hence, we should preach the Word in order to dispense doctrine that is healthy for the soul, not detrimental to it!

Of course, the key to healthy teaching and doctrinally accurate preaching is a devotion to preaching **Scripturally**. Paul reminded Timothy of how he had “known the holy scriptures” from his childhood (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul emphasized the value of the Scriptures when he told Timothy:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The role of the preacher is to profit the members by saturating them with the Scriptures. The preacher’s task is to employ the Scriptures to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct the members in righteousness. Too many sermons are void of any Scriptural content. It is an insult to God and to the people in the pew to fail to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2).

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### **To Preach Boldly But Unlovingly**

The same apostle Paul who told Timothy to “war” and to “fight” also told Timothy, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Thus, according to the apostle Paul, a Gospel preacher like Timothy should possess a spirit of love. Again, this proves that it is possible for a preacher to be both militant for the truth and loving in his demeanor. Because of his love for the truth (cf. Ephesians 4:15), the gospel preacher respects the truth about proclaiming the Word in a loving fashion.

We should preach **gently**. Paul explained to Timothy that the servant of the Lord is expected to “be gentle” (2 Timothy 2:24). The Greek word employed here was often used by Greek writers to refer to a nurse dealing with trying children and how she would have to maintain kindness even in administering their treatment. Likewise, sometimes the preacher has to administer treatment that is unpleasant, and he must endeavor to do so with kindness.

We should preach **patiently**. The servant of the Lord must also be patient (2 Timothy 2:24). This means we must be willing to endure difficulties without becoming angry or upset. Or to put it as Paul put it, we should “exhort with all longsuffering” (2 Timothy 4:2).

We should preach **meekly**. It is the role of the preacher to meekly instruct those who oppose themselves (2 Timothy 2:25). This requires a gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one’s dealings with others. One cannot help but think of Moses and how he had to deal with the constant criticisms of the children of Israel. Yet, time and again he interceded on their behalf. The brethren may mistreat us and speak evil of us but we must maintain our cool and lovingly preach to them anyway.

We should preach **encouragingly**. Paul makes it clear that the role of the preacher is not just to reprove and rebuke; he must also exhort (2 Timothy 4:2). We preach the Word to cause someone to be encouraged or consoled. A car battery has two poles: one negative and one positive. Both poles have a part to play in the operation of the battery. Likewise, in preaching, at times there should be a negative thrust (reprove, rebuke) and a positive thrust (exhort).

### **To Focus On Foolish And Unlearned Questions**

Paul warned Timothy not to get wrapped up in “fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying” (1 Timothy 1:4). In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul continued this emphasis. He told Timothy:

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness...But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes (2 Timothy 2:16, 23).

Likewise, Paul instructed Titus not to give heed

...to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth... But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain (Titus 1:14; 3:9).

If we are not careful, we can become wrapped up in preaching on matters that are not matters of doctrine, but matters of personal opinion. Many a church has split because the preacher was more intent on advancing his personal view about a non-essential matter of opinion than he was on delivering sermons that would edify and build up the congregation.



### **To Quit Studying**

Paul commanded Timothy to give attendance to reading the Scriptures (1 Timothy 4:13), and “to give diligence to show himself approved unto God...a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Paul went on to say that the servant of the Lord must be “apt to teach” (2 Timothy 2:24). The Greek word used here means to be “skillful in teaching.” Of course, people may have different ideas about what qualities make one a skillful teacher. In the context of being a preacher, the emphasis is not so much on the style of presentation as on the accuracy and content of the presentation. It takes work to be a skillful teacher and the difference between the average teacher and the skillful one is usually readily apparent to the hearer.

### **To Become A Hobby Rider And Fail To Preach The Whole Counsel Of God**

Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had “kept back nothing that was profitable” (Acts 20:20). He told them that he had not shunned to declare unto them “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Paul’s instructions to Titus show the comprehensive nature of the message we have been given to preach. We have a God-given message for the aged men, aged women, young women and young men, and for servants and masters (Titus 2:1-10). A survey of Paul’s epistles reveals that he had an inspired message for parents and children, for widows and the married, for elders and those who wish to become elders, for deacons and those who wish to become deacons, etc. The local preacher must honestly and constantly examine his list of topics preached to make sure that he is covering all the bases. Expository preaching is a great way to accomplish this task.

### **To Think That Preaching Something Once Is Enough**

Paul counseled Timothy that in order to be a good minister he would need to put the brethren in remembrance of the things Paul had written (1 Timothy 4:6). In order for his hearers to be nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, Timothy would need to repeat to the brethren the things Paul had written. In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul made essentially the same plea (2 Timothy 2:14). Paul likewise exhorted Titus to “affirm constantly” the things the apostle had written unto him (Titus 3:8). Finally, the apostle Peter told his readers:

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance (2 Peter 1:12-15).

As these passages indicate, we should preach the Word often to remind our hearers of material they may have already heard. This has a strengthening effect.

### **To Fail To Practice What We Preach**

It is not enough to teach the right things with our lips, we must do the right things with our lives. After telling Timothy to command and teach, Paul hastened to command Timothy to be an example to the believers: in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12). He

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commanded Timothy,

Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine;  
continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both  
save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Timothy  
4:16).

Timothy was to exemplify the qualities of a man of God by fleeing worldly things and pursuing after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness (1 Timothy 6:11; cf. 2 Timothy 2:22). Titus was instructed to exemplify in his life a pattern of good works (Titus 2:7). As preachers, we must remember that there will be no power in our pulpits if there is no pattern in our lives.

### **To Neglect To Train**

#### **The Next Generation Of Gospel Preachers**

The role of the preacher is to take what he has learned and to commit it unto others who shall be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). Preachers who do this perpetuate their work and influence in ways that cannot be measured this side of eternity.

### **To Get Discouraged And Quit**

There are times when things may get difficult and the preacher will be tempted to give up altogether. Yet, Paul enjoined Timothy to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). He encouraged him to continue in the things he had learned (2 Timothy 3:14). As preachers we may have to “endure afflictions” (2 Timothy 4:5). Nevertheless, like the apostle Paul, we must fight a good fight until we have finished our course (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

### **To Fail To Focus On The Bright Hope Of The Future**

It is easy to get wrapped up in the negative things, the things the church isn't doing, or the liberal things the brotherhood is doing. We have to address these things from time to time, but we must not forget to accentuate the positive parts of Christianity! If we faithfully preach God's message then, like Paul, we will be able to look expectantly to the time when we will receive the crown of life (2 Timothy 4:6-8), the time when we will enter the heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18). We should preach the Word to give the person in the pew a reason to anticipate the future with Christ. Thus, Paul wrote to Titus about "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). We have a wonderful message to preach! Let us preach it like we believe it, and live it out in our lives!

### **To Omit The Plan Of Salvation From Our Preaching**

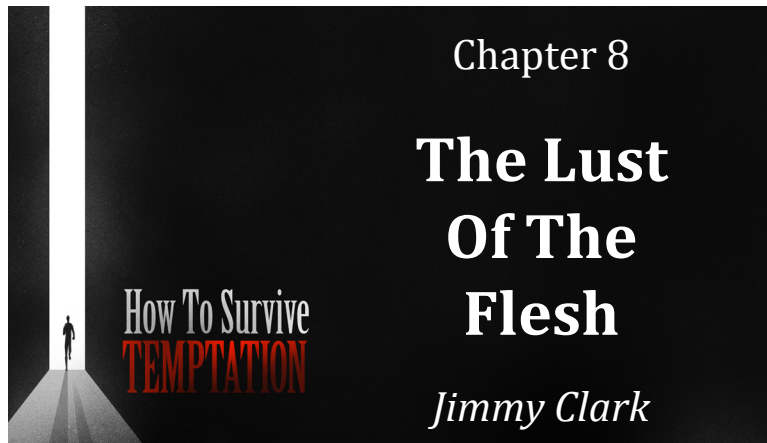
More and more sermons are preached without the plan of salvation even being given. Not every sermon has to be a full length treatise on the plan of salvation, but neither should we omit to preach and include the **plan of salvation**. A study of the book of Acts reveals that preaching Jesus to men and women included preaching the plan whereby they could be saved by Jesus. After convincing certain Jews that they had slain God's only begotten Son, Peter told his inquiring hearers to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). When Philip "preached Jesus" to the eunuch he must have included an explanation of how to get into Jesus because the eunuch, on his own, said, "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" The chariot came to a grinding halt; the

eunuch confessed his faith in Jesus and was then buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life (Acts 8:35-40; Romans 6:3-4). Paul and Silas preached the plan of salvation to the Philippian jailer and he responded obediently, along with the other accountable people in his household (Acts 16:30-34). Jesus told His apostles to go into “all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Then He said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). When Paul came to Corinth he preached the Gospel and “many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Paul himself had the plan of salvation preached unto him by Ananias (Acts 22:16).

### **Conclusion**

Gospel preaching produced phenomenal growth in the first century (Acts 4:4; 6:1-7; 8:12; 11:19-21; 12:24; 19:10, 20) and the Gospel is no less powerful today. We do not need a new Gospel or some new gimmick. We just need to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2)! As preachers, let us remember why we preach, what we should preach, to whom we should preach, and how we should preach. If we follow the New Testament pattern of preaching then the powerful Gospel will still do its work—it is, after all, the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16)!





**J**ohn wrote,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17, KJV).

The material of this writing will concentrate on the phrase “the lust of the flesh.”

The Greek word translated “lust” in the above passage is from the word meaning “desire, craving, longing” (Thayer, p. 238). A synonym for lust is the word passion. Thayer gives the meaning of the Greek word for passion to be “a feeling which the mind suffers, an affection of the mind, emotion, passion; passionate desire; used by the Greeks in either a good or bad sense... In the N.T. in a bad sense, depraved passion: Colossians 3:5; vile passions, Romans 1:26; in the passion of

lust, 1 Thessalonians 4:5” (Thayer, p. 472). Thayer makes the distinction between the Greek words for passion and lust as passion presenting the passive while lust the active side of a vice. He states, “lust is more comprehensive in meaning than passion; lust is evil desire, passion is ungovernable desire” (Thayer, p. 472). A passage where both passion and lust are cited together is Paul’s writing to the Galatian brethren, where he wrote, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24). Another synonym for desire is sometimes translated covet. While covet can be used in a good sense (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:31, KJV) it is more often found in the evil sense (cf. Acts 20:33) and prohibited (cf. Romans 13:9). The noun form for “lust” appears in 34 passages in the New Testament. The verb form appears in 16 passages. One particular passage has the term in a noun and verb form. Paul wrote, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Corinthians 10:6). One can see that the context determines the usage as to how the term is to be translated into English.

There is a sense in which the Greek word often translated “lust” is used in a good sense and translated “desire.” Jesus said, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer:” (Luke 22:15). Paul wrote, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). A study of these passages will also show that the Greek word is used in a good sense (cf. Matthew 13:17; Luke 17:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; 1 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 6:11; 1 Peter 1:12 and Revelation 9:6).

There are several passages on the prohibitive side of the term “lust” that do not give specific details as to what man

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desires, but it does show that man's desires can be turned to the wrong object or with the wrong intent. James wrote,

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 1:14-15).

Peter wrote, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:" (1 Peter 1:14). Again, Peter wrote,

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:4).

Paul wrote to Titus,

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

Other passages that stress the general nature of lust or wrong desire as the enemy of the soul are Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:22; 2 Timothy 2:22; Jude 16; Jude 18; Ephesians 2:3; 1 Peter 2:11 and several others. For the purpose of this writing, it is necessary to concentrate on certain specifics that are addressed as the lust of the flesh as might differ, though is interconnected with the concepts, from the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

### **Hunger Satisfaction**

One of the first drives of the flesh learned by human beings is that of filling the belly. Peter wrote, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2-3). The illustration of the craving of a newborn babe is parallel to the desire for the word of God that man might live (cf. Matthew 4:4). It is a distinctive aspect of human survival that food and drink be ingested that life may continue. The physical body will begin to die when the desire for sustenance is no longer there. Hospice teaches many families to watch for such when death is drawing near.

There are several passages that address the virtue of satisfying the drive of hunger and thirst. It was stated of the beggar Lazarus, “And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores” (Luke 16:21). Seeing that Lazarus is in Abraham’s bosom when he died (cf. Luke 16:22) indicates that his desire was not sinful. It is written in the chapter before of the prodigal son,

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger (Luke 15:16-17).

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes,

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13).

The God-given drive to satisfy the needs of the body through food and drink are therefore not innately sinful.

The problem arises when the thinking of man turns the ingesting into a focus of life instead of living for God. Paul wrote of certain one's who were worldly minded,

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Philippians 3:18-19).

Satisfying the desires of the flesh as a primary purpose in life is a central focus of the sin of the lust of the flesh. Consider two passages that illustrate such. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6). This is pointing to the record of Numbers 11:4 and the reminder in Psalm 106:14. These sought out only the physical things from God to the neglect of the spiritual. The Bible states of God giving them their desire, "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm 106:15). Jesus clearly shows what satisfies, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Certain disciples who followed Jesus that he might merely fill their belly (cf. John 6:26-27) would soon depart from him (cf. John 6:66). Jesus challenges his own apostles as to their intent of following or leaving as well. Peter sets forth the heart of overcoming the lust of the flesh, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). Another reference of the lust of the flesh in desiring physical food over the spiritual

is written by John in the book of Revelation.

And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing (Revelation 18:14-15).

While the fruits that they lusted after would be more than just food items, such would be included as a means to make the merchants rich. Notice the list of such things as “cinnamon” and “wine and oil” and “fine flour, and wheat” (cf. Revelation 18:13).

Another aspect of filling the belly as a part of the lust of the flesh is in the sin of gluttony. Eating and drinking has a way of satisfying the pleasure center of the brain. Some center their lifestyles in being “foodies” or “epicureans” of fine dining. While the fleshly desire of hunger is godly in itself, the Bible regulates the use of the body for its good. Solomon wrote, “When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite” (Proverbs 23:1-2). Again, “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Proverbs 23:20-21). Paul told Titus of those in Crete, “One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies” (Titus 1:12). The American Standard translates that last descriptive phrase “idle gluttons” (Titus 1:12, ASV). The Christian cannot have the axiom “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them” (1 Corinthians 6:13). Food is to be taken in moderation and for the purpose to strengthen the body to serve God.

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### **Human Sexuality**

Another human body drive put there by God is that of human intimacy or human sexuality. As the body of a child matures and starts to develop toward adulthood, there is a great need to teach what God expects from that development. Man is a moral being and is not to behave like the wild beasts. Jeremiah wrote, “They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour’s wife” (Jeremiah 5:8). The impulses of the flesh are holy and good when directed under the law that God gave for human intimacy. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

Solomon wrote,

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love (Proverbs 5:15-19).

## The Lust Of The Flesh

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It is clearly stated in the New Testament, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). These are a few of the references that show God’s design for human sexuality and how to avoid the sin of the lust of the flesh in this regard.

Consider passages that show the condemnation of human sexuality centered in the mere lust of the flesh from a worldly viewpoint. Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). While the lust of the eye is equally addressed here, there must first be a lust of the flesh before the eye would seek out its object. Paul wrote of the practice worldly lusts,

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

A previous writing of such uncleanness is seen in Romans. Paul wrote, “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves” (Romans 1:24). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians on how a husband is to see and live with his own wife.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not is the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

The Song of Solomon is in itself a divine commentary on

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the purity of married love in every aspect. Pre-marital, extra-marital, human sexuality without ever being married, same sex unions and the like are the world's way to find what can only be found in the purity of marriage. Giving in to the impulses of the flesh without following God's divine instructions brings ruin to the family, society and the souls of men everywhere.

### **Hedonistic Style**

As an overall summary of the point concerning the lust of the flesh, such desire covers anything and everything that satisfies the fleshly longings that are contrary to God's divine will. There are several items found throughout the Bible that address things more than the fleshly drives already addressed.

Paul wrote,

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet (Romans 7:7).

The words translated "lust" and "covet" are from the same Greek root word. The actual command states,

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's (Exodus 20:17).

This is the same command Paul addresses in Romans 13:9. Herein is a third aspect of the lust of the flesh; that is, anything that one desires to make one's flesh comfortable and satisfied outside of what God permits. There is nothing wrong with having a house, a wife, a servant or livestock or anything ethically and morally permissible. However, desiring to satisfy a fleshly

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## The Lust Of The Flesh

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life based on one's own impulses is the flaw. James wrote,

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your own lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (James 4:1-3).

Fightings and the accompanied anger that feeds it as lusts that drive the fleshly minded to gain a foothold in controlling one's own pleasure. Paul wrote to Titus,

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another (Titus 3:3).

The lust of the flesh for ease and leisure will stop at nothing to eliminate anything and everyone that gets in the way. Such a lifestyle is summarized by the words of the farmer who finally finished his barn with his goods stored insider, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12:19). Such is the product of the lust of the flesh. Peter wrote of the world,

For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (1 Peter 4:3-4).

The reason why Christians do not live that way is "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections

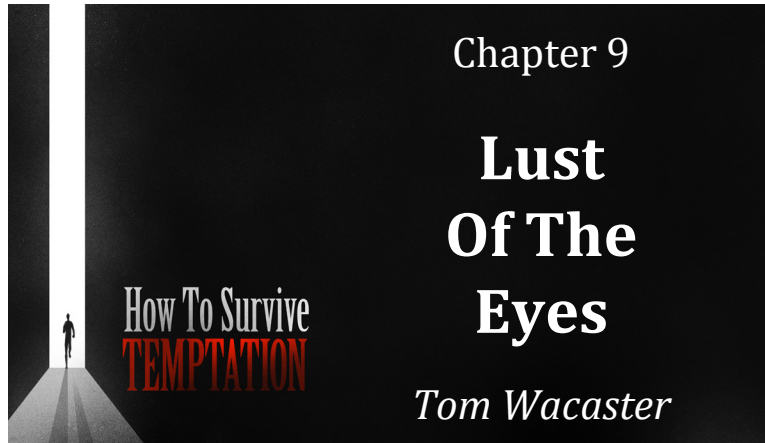
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and lusts” (Galatians 5:24). The Christian enjoys the things of life, not to the expense of sacrificing his soul, but to the practice of conforming his lifestyle to the desires of God’s will for him, not his desires for his own impulses. Truly, God has given “us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). However, the Christian does not trust in riches and live unto himself, but unto God and his design for happiness.

Therefore, eat and drink according to God’s revealed will, enjoy your marriage and family and use God’s blessings to do good works and spread the light of true blessedness in a Biblical, moral lifestyle. The world only wishes it could be satisfied like that. Such can only be found in the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22-23).





### **Introduction**

Oh be careful little eyes what you see,  
Oh be careful little eyes what you see!  
There's a Father up above,  
Looking down in tender love;  
So be careful little eyes what you see.

**F**rom the beginning of time the eyes have played an important role in the history mankind. One of the earliest passages that refer to the pleasures of sight has to do with God Himself. On the sixth day of Creation God brought forth “the beasts of the earth after their kind, cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind” (Genesis 1:25). As the verse ends we are provided a glimpse at the tender side of our God: “And God saw that it was good.” Does God see? Indeed He does, and He has passed along to mankind—the crowing aspect of His Creation—this wonderful ability to “look” upon his surroundings and enjoy the aesthetics of God’s handiwork.

Consider this wonderful thing we call “sight” and the

mechanism that provides us with such a blessing—the human eye. Evolutionists still struggle with how the eye could possibly have evolved when considering the complexity of the human eye.

Furnished with automatic aiming, automatic focusing, and automatic aperture adjustment, the human eye can function from almost complete darkness to bright sunlight, see an object the diameter of a fine hair, and make about 100,000 separate motions in an average day, faithfully affording us a continuous series of color stereoscopic pictures. All of this is performed usually without complaint, and then while we sleep, it carries on its own maintenance work (Huse 24).

So complex is the human eye that Charles Darwin acknowledged that “the belief that an organ as perfect as the eye could have formed by natural selection is more than enough to stagger anyone” (Huse 26). Indeed, what a blessing it is to be able to see!

In 1991 James Patterson and Peter Kim conducted a scientific study regarding what Americans believe with regard to God, morals, money, and a wide range of other topics often considered ‘taboo.’ According to Robert Seidstein, the news is “not good” (Seidstein). The authors of the book made the following observation regarding religious life in America:

God is alive and very well. But right now in America, fewer people are listening to what God has to say than ever before. Ninety percent of the people we questioned said that they truly believe in God. It would be the logical conclusion then to think that God is a meaningful factor in today’s

America. But we reached a different conclusion when we dug deeper with our questions. In every single region of the country, when we asked how people make up their minds on issues of right and wrong, we found that they simply do not turn to God or religion to help them decide about seminal or moral issues of the day. For most people, religion plays virtually no role in shaping their opinions on a long list of important public questions. This is true even for questions that seem closely related to religion: birth control, abortion, even teaching Creationism and the role of women in the clergy. On not one of those questions did a majority of people seek the guidance of religion in finding answers. Most people do not even know their church's position on the important issues. That, perhaps, is the true measure of America's indifference to the teachings of organized religion: We don't follow what our church says because we're not interested enough to find out what it's saying (Loftus, quoting Patterson and Kim).

Gary Summers provided the following statistical information derived from Patterson and Kim's work. Shockingly, 91% of Americans admit to lying regularly. The percentage of spouses unfaithful to their partner is staggering. Cheating, dishonesty, theft, and embezzlement now seem to be a part of the very fabric of our society. Pertinent to our study for this hour, Summers pointed out that "we also admitted that we are profoundly affected by 'the lust of the eyes' (1 John 2:15), which is the desire to possess what is not ours any way that we can—legal, or illegal, moral or immoral" (Summers 1).

The lust of the eyes is the second in a trio of temptations that Satan has used repeatedly to draw men away from their

Creator. The other two are the “lust of the flesh and...the vainglory of life” (1 John 2:16). It is to the second in this trio that we address our thoughts for this hour. Like an octopus whose tentacles are far reaching and multifaceted, so it is with the “lust of the eyes.” For some it is “eyes full of adultery” (2 Peter 2:14); for others it is the insatiable desire for more things. “Lust of the eyes” motivates men to seek more power, prestige and prominence among their peers. The “lust of the eyes” is only one aspect of “all that is in the world,” but like its two counterparts (“lusts of the flesh” and the “vainglory of life”) the devil has used it as a part of his arsenal to destroy those in the world, and those weak and unsuspecting children of God who have yet to overcome its powerful draw.

In order to appreciate the extent and danger of this avenue of temptation, let’s consider a definition of terms, a delineation of what is involved, the dangers that confront us, and the defense against the onslaught of Satan through the “lust of the eyes.”

### **Definition**

Any argument begins with a proper definition of terms. There is always a possibility that the child of God might underestimate the temptation and sins associated with this particular part of John’s warning regarding “all that is in the world.” In some cases this is due, no doubt, to an improper understanding of the meaning of the words themselves.

“Lust” is our English word that translates ‘epithumia’ (ep-ee-thoo-mee’-ah). Thayer says it is a “desire, craving, longing, desire for that which is forbidden” (Thayer, Electronic Version). Webster points out that the word includes “lust of gain,” and “carnal appetite and unlawful desire or carnal pleasure” (Webster, Electronic Version). A quick search on

my Bible software revealed that the word appears some 40 times in the New Testament and not one time is it used in the context of something good. It is always expressive of some desire for things forbidden and/or contrary to the will of God (cf. Matthew 5:28, Mark 4:19, John 8:44, Romans 1:24, 1:27, 6:12, 7:7, 13:14, Galatians 5:16, 5:24, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, 1 Timothy 6:9, 2 Timothy 2:22, James 1:14-15, 4:1—to mention only a few passages). Marvin Vincent makes the following significant observation with regard to the lust of the eyes when compared with the lust of the flesh:

The desire of the eyes does not involve appropriation. It is satisfied with contemplating. It represents a higher type of desire than the desire of the flesh, in that it seeks mental pleasure where the other seeks physical gratification. There is thus a significant hint in this passage that even high artistic gratification may have no fellowship with God (Vincent, Electronic Version).

The next word for consideration is our English word “eyes.” The Greek word is ‘*ophthalmos*’ (of-thal-mos’), meaning “eyes, sight” (Thayer, Electronic Version). The “eyes” are the physical organ that serves as the gateway to the heart of man. Here, then, is the lust that has its origin in sight.

Now we combine the words as per John’s inspired record, and we have the “lust of the eyes.” What John is warning us against are those inordinate desires that originate from gazing upon some object so as to produce the temptation to turn away from that which is pure, holy and righteous and to embrace that which is contrary to the will of the Father.

If we expand on that thought it becomes apparent that the lust of the eyes is the avenue through which the outward things of the world such as riches, pomp, and beauty, inflame us.

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Consider a couple of passages that help us see this relationship between the “lust of the flesh” and the “lust of the eyes.” In Romans 1:24 it is said, “Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves.” The inner man (i.e. the “heart”) became consumed with the lust of things contrary to God’s will, leading them “unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored.” Barnes had this noteworthy comment: That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly raiment, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to the gay vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life (Barnes, The Word Bible Software).

### **Delineation**

By “delineation” we mean a detailed description of what is involved in this particular aspect of heaven’s warning. To put it another way, what are some of the areas to which this warning might apply? I want to bring to our attention at least two areas of concern.

First, there is the “lust of the eyes” that comes with an improper gaze upon someone of the opposite sex for the express purpose of lusting after the individual. Jesus warned against such in the Sermon on the Mount: “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Peter also warns that it is possible to reach a state of moral depravity where one has become so corrupt in this area that he has “eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin” (2 Peter 2:14). This particular aspect of the “lust of the eyes” is dangerous because of the ability of a person to engage



in the sin while remaining completely undetected. Who, for example, can detect what is in the mind of a man when a woman walks by in tight jeans? Unchecked, that little “glance” can rapidly deteriorate to the point where the little “glance” becomes a chain of bondage that ultimately leads that person into a situation where his soul is captivated by the lust of the eyes. Internet pornography has become a booming business, and the power to captivate the minds of those enslaved to its appeal is due to the ability of the viewer to participate in its pleasures completely undetected. More on this later.

Second, there is the “lust of the eyes” associated with materialism. This is the pursuit of the almighty dollar; the acquisition of more “stuff” in a vain attempt to find satisfaction in those things that simply cannot provide satisfaction. In his commentary under 1 Corinthians 14:20, Albert Barnes makes this significant observation:

Much that pertains to dress, to accomplishment, to living, to employment, to amusement, to conversation, will appear, when we come to die, to have been like the playthings of “children;” and we shall feel that the immortal mind has been employed, and the time wasted, and the strength exhausted in that which was foolish and puerile (Barnes, Electronic Notes).

Jesus taught us that we should not lay up treasures upon the earth (Matthew 6:19-20). Solomon reminds us, “As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand” (Ecclesiastes 5:15). The lust of the eyes in pursuit of the things of this world can only lead to misery, and cause those who desire to be rich to fall into temptation, a snare, and many foolish and hurtful desires (1 Timothy 6:9).

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### **Dangers**

If the devil could persuade men that the participation in a “little sin” is not dangerous, his battle would be half won. Like so many other sins, modern man has had the proverbial wool pulled over his eyes and bought into the lie that sin is not as offensive in the sight of God as the “preacher” might have us to believe. Consequently our society has witnessed a redefinition of terms relating to sinful practices. Adultery? It is nothing more than an innocent little “affair,” or “extra-marital sex.” Drunkenness is a disease, homosexuality is an “alternate life style,” transgender behavior is now “gender identification,” theft is “social maladjustment,” and the prodigal son was nothing more than a juvenile delinquent. The perpetual liar is an “extrovert with imaginative talents,” or an unusually gifted “story teller.” Murder via abortion is “pro-choice,” the lazy are “under-privileged,” and the irreligious and profane person is simply “open minded” and “tolerant.” Borrowing the words of author Karl Menninger, “What ever happened to sin?” Indeed! Our public school system has been used as an instrument in the devil’s hand to confuse the minds of men; so much so that young boys and girls no longer know their gender, or what bathroom they ought to use in public places.

What does this have to do with the “lust of the eyes”? More than we care to admit. For one thing, the devil has convinced the unsuspecting that since “looking” is not “partaking,” that therefore we can “look,” so long as we do not go beyond the gaze and plunge headlong into the sin itself. Consider, for example, the growing attitude toward the viewing of pornography. When I was a child, pornography was something you purchased in sleazy back alley retail outlets. It was considered a vice and something to be avoided by any respectable citizen, especially someone claiming to be a

follower of Christ. Attitudes have changed in 50 years, and not for the better. If the reports I have seen are anywhere close to accurate, the statistics are staggering. This is particularly disconcerting when it comes to those claiming a faith in Christ. A recent article in the Gospel Advocate had the following:

According to a 2016 study of evangelical churches, 41 percent of practicing Christian male teens (ages 18-24) and 13 percent of practicing female teens struggle with pornography. But pornography is not only affecting our youth. Some 21 percent of youth ministers and 14 percent of preachers also admit to struggling with pornography. Because Barna Group's survey record self-reported results and because we cannot assume all of the people answered honestly, the actual statistics are probably much higher (Murphy 39).

The prevailing attitude in our Western world seems to be, "Look, but don't touch." That such an attitude is at least a distinct possibility is implied in our Lord's warning, "But I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). It is just as much as sin to "lust" after a woman as it is to actually engage in the physical act of fornication.

A second danger has to do with the progressive nature of sin. Hebrews 3:13 warns us not to be "hardened" by the deceitfulness of sin. James 1:14-15 shows the progressiveness of sin:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust,

and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived,  
beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown,  
bringeth forth death.

I cannot recall where I came across this quote by J.C. Ryle, but it captures the essence of this inherent danger in the lust of the eyes:

There are two ways of coming down from the top of a ladder; one is to jump down, and the other is to come down by the steps: but both will lead you to the bottom. So also there are two ways of going to hell; one is to walk into it with your eyes open—few people do that; the other is to go down by the steps of little sins—and that way, I fear, is only too common. Put up with a few little sins, and you will soon want a few more. Even a heathen could say, “Who was ever content with only one sin?” If you put up with little sins then your path in life will be worse and worse every year. Jeremy Taylor very clearly described the progress of sin in a man: “First it startles him, then it becomes pleasing, then easy, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then a way of life! Then the man feels no guilt, then obstinate, then resolves never to repent, and then he is damned. Sin starts out as a ripple on calm waters, but before you know it will turn into a tidal wave that can’t be controlled” (J.C. Ryle, source unknown).

I do not have opportunity to watch a lot of television. In fact, my wife and I pulled the plug on cable television for the simple reason that it has very little to offer in the area of wholesome entertainment. Having said that, one program that I truly enjoyed over the four or five years of its existence

was “DOC.” It is the story of a country grown boy that finds himself practicing medicine in New York after his graduation from med school. A close associate of Doc Cassidy is Nate, a policeman of outstanding moral qualities and true character. On this particular occasion Nate was tempted to lie in order to protect a fellow policeman who was pilfering money from drug busts. But Nate would not give in, and in the end honesty and integrity won out over greed and covetousness. At the end of each weekly segment Doc Cassidy would get on his little laptop and write to his mentor back in Wyoming via email. His comments speak volumes: “Even in the little things, do what is right, cause a soul is seldom sold in one great auction. Instead, it is bartered away in a thousand tiny trades, a little bit at a time.” Sage advice for a sinful nation that is selling its soul on the installment plan and giving in to the temptation of the “lust of the eyes.”

### **Defense**

In order to overcome the lust of the eyes it is important that we study the directions provided in God’s word. Paul informs us,

There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

That being the case, we can live confidently, knowing that every temptation involving the lust of eyes can be overcome. There is a way of escape; we just need to look for it.

Job provided wonderful (and we might add, inspired)

advice on how to overcome the “lust of the eyes.” In Job 31:1-12 that godly man listed a number of sins that he had not committed, one of which had to do with the topic for this hour, i.e. the “lust of the eyes.” The very first verse in that chapter tells us of Job’s covenant that he made with his eyes: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; How then should I look upon a virgin?” (Job 31:1). We too should make a covenant with our eyes, lest we become the victim of the “lust of the eyes.” Brother Allen Webster addressed this very verse in the 2012 Power Lectures, and with his permission, I share with you some of his pertinent advice along this line with some additional comments of my own.

First, brother Webster points out that “an eye covenant sets a goal” (Webster 341). “Making a written covenant with our eyes sets a goal, gives us a mantra to repeat in times of temptation” (Webster 341). Our focus remains on Christ and heavenly things, and we thereby determine to seek the one thing that is of greatest importance, namely God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Second, “an eye covenant aligns priorities and fortifies resolve” (Webster 342). Bobby Knight, the coach of the national champion Indiana basketball team told his team, “Don’t fight the rabbits. Fight the elephants. If you spend your time fighting the rabbits, you will get killed by the elephants.” In other words, we must pick the proper priorities. Time spent on the trivial will cause us to neglect the more important. If we keep our priorities straight we will recognize the foolishness of allowing roaming eyes to take our eyes of the greater goal of heaven.

Third, “an eye covenant moves us from remorse to change” (Webster 343). Lustful eyes should bring a sense of remorse to every child of God. We have one of two choices.

We can either determine that we will change our behavior, and put the remorse behind us, or stay in our sin and continue toward that inevitable point where we cease to feel that guilt of sin. Making a covenant with our eyes will help along the path to recovery from the “lust of the eyes.”

Fourth, “an eye covenant gives a tool for character building” (Webster 346). As brother Webster put it, “An eye covenant shows that we are serious about our relationship with God” (ibid). Henry Ward Beecher is credited with having said the following:

It is not what a man gets, but what a man is, that he should think of. He should think first of his character and then of his condition, for if he has the former, he need have no fear of the latter. Character will draw condition after it (copied into personal database, source not recorded).

I shall close this particular point with the words of the Psalmist: “Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). A good dose of God’s word in the heart of any individual will provide a wall of safety against the “lust of the eyes.”

### **Conclusion**

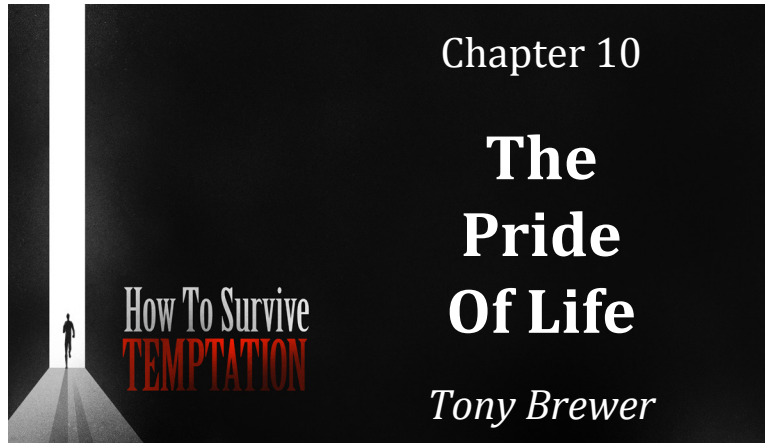
Lust of the eyes will eat away as a canker at the soul, robbing a man of his strength, and rendering its victim powerless against those things that war against the soul. It is absurd to think we can merely shun temptations without uprooting them altogether. Eventually the temptation will return, greater in strength and more violent than before. We have defined temptation, examined its various forms, exposed the danger, and suggested a defense. May God give us the

strength to overcome the “lust of the eyes” so we can live pure and holy lives in the sight of our Father and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory now and forever.

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**F**or all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (2 John 2:16-17).

We need the reminder from John to trust in God and not love the world or trust in our own power. The apostle John writes to Christians, in general, who need a gentle reminder to stay faithful to God (Stancliff, 183). He pens the thesis of the book,

...these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).

Specifically, John writes to those who “believe on the name of the Son of God” for the purpose that they might believe and know their eternal destination.

Every once in a while, we all need to be reminded we are children of God and that He upholds the world by the Word

of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Sadly, because of the trials of life, some Christians start thinking that they are all alone, that there is no help, and that every trial they have overcome thus far was because of their own strength. The attitude of “I did it all myself by myself” is indicative of the pride of life. Our assigned topic deals with surviving temptation which comes from the pride of life. We will address our topic from three vantage points, the pride of life explained, exemplified, and eradicated.

### **The Pride Of Life Explained**

In order to better explain the pride of life, we will define the term “pride.” Also, we will contrast John’s list of ungodly attributes to avoid, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life with Paul’s list of godly attributes, sober living, right living, and godly living (Titus 2:11-12; John 2:16).

#### ***Pride Defined***

“Pride,” in the original language, is defined as one thinking more of himself than reality justifies and who is punished by the gods for it (TDNT). The stem of the word used by John is also used by James, “but now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil” (James 4:16). The King James Version translates the stem of the word which translates “pride” in 1 John as “boastings” in James. Everyone knows a boaster. The boaster has done everything, seen everything, and has done it better than you! The boaster is too foolish to realize he is alive by the grace of God, and for some reason, no one has decided to forcefully stop his boasting.

#### ***Ungodly And Godly Attributes***

We can better understand the idea of the pride of life if

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we contrast John's sinful list with Paul's godly list. Paul sets forth in his letter to Titus a list of godly attributes that are the antithesis of John's ungodly attributes:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13).

Paul writes that the grace of God teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly. In every line of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, God's grace is teaching mankind how to live in this world having a sober mind, walking uprightly before men, and interacting with and aligning oneself with God in right fashion. As Robert R. Taylor once said, "here we have inward living, outward living, and upward living" (Taylor, 53). John writes that to suffer from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is to not love God but to love the world (1 John 2:15-17). The lust (desire) of the flesh is the antithesis of sobriety as in those things which we desire will be perverted if our focus is not directed by the grace of God which bringeth salvation (Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:16). The lust (desire) of the eyes is the antithesis of living righteously before mankind (Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:16). When we are not guided by what the Grace of God teaches us the way we interact with our fellow man will be perverse and we will sacrifice walking uprightly before our fellow man on the altar of obtaining those perverse things that we saw with our eyes (Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:16). Not being guided by the teaching of the grace of God creates the perfect environment for us to fall prey to the temptation of the pride of life.

The pride of life is the antithesis of godliness. If we are not receiving the teaching of the grace of God then our sobriety and uprightness before our fellow man will be compromised, furthermore we will not interact rightly with God through His precepts, commandments, and divine examples. In short, when we are not living soberly, righteously, and godly we are not learning what the grace of God teaches, thus we are suffering from the pride of life. In our ignorance, we are blinded by the pride of life, because we are not learning what the grace of God is teaching. In blinded ignorance we become self serving and self satisfied. We think we have done everything on our own with no help at all. We see something we want, we take action to get it, and we take pride in the fact that we fulfilled that desire ourselves. We have become idol worshipers worshipping the god of our lives, ourself. The pride of life is idolatry.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* has the etymology of the word “idolatry” as giving religious service to something that can be seen physically (Oxford). When God “that can not be seen” is supplanted for “that which can be seen,” then “that which can be seen” becomes god in our lives (Romans 1:18-25). When God who can not be seen is supplanted by our own image and will, then the pride of life has blinded us.

### **The Pride Of Life Exemplified**

A great example of a people suffering from the pride of life is found in the children of Israel. The children of Israel were brought up out of Egyptian bondage and almost immediately began thinking they knew better than God. They thought their particular set of problems were unique to them and that they had to handle them all alone. If we suffer from the pride of life we will have the Israelite’s attitude, “no one has suffered like me, I am going to have to fix this all on my own,

and God is singling me out to punish or test.” The Israelites faced this type of self-idolatry as they came out of Egyptian captivity. Let us notice how Paul shows that the children of Israel exemplify the pride of life.

***Paul Writes To Proud People***

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth warning of idolatry. Paul brings to the church’s mind the children of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). Many in the Corinthian church fell prey to the person distress in Corinth (1 Corinthians 7:26). In direct response to the idolatry which arises from the pride of life Paul admonished, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The ellipsis in Paul’s admonition begs to be given voice, “wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth [alone] take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12 TB). Paul goes on to assure,

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 ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Verse thirteen is the assurance that God helps the Corinthian Christian to bear the temptation that comes from living during the “present distress.” Paul wanted to make sure the Christians in Corinth did not fall prey to the self-idolatry of thinking that they alone were lord of their lives and that they alone were able to deal with their problems. To illustrate and give power to his admonition and assurance Paul uses six examples of the children of Israel falling to idolatry after being made to drink from one spiritual source.

***Examples Of The Israelites Pride Of Life***

“But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:5). The sin Paul refers to here was not trusting God to take care of the “giants” which were in the land of Promise (Numbers 13:31-33; 14:22-23). Thinking they stood alone to vanquish the enemies out of the land of Promise, the Israelites suffered punishment to those who were twenty years and upward. An entire generation did not survive the temptation of the pride of life (Numbers 14:29).

“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Corinthians 10:6). The children desired (lusted) for the food that was given to them in Egypt (Numbers 11:5-6). This desire (lust) was on the heels of the multitude murmuring, “who shall give us flesh to eat” (Numbers 14:4). The children of Israel thought they were all alone and that they faced problems no one else had ever faced. They did not survive the temptation of the pride of life (Numbers 11:33-14).

“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play” (1 Corinthians 10:7). Perhaps the most egregious infractions against God by the children of Israel is the making of the golden calf. Just a short time after being liberated from Egyptian bondage the people asked for gods that they could see (Exodus 32:1). The children of Israel have seen the ten plagues and the miracles of Moses and Aaron and still did not know better! According to the authority of their own minds, they worshiped the golden calf (Exodus 32:6). God was not well pleased with the corruption of His children (Exodus 32:7). For forsaking the plan and power of God about thee thousand men did not survive the temptation of the pride of

life (Exodus 32:28).

“Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Corinthians 8:8). A sad account is the temptation of Balak at the advice of Balaam (Numbers 25:3; 31:16). Because the children of Israel committed fornication with the women of Moab, there fell twenty three to twenty four thousand people (Numbers 25:9). Because of fulfilling the lust of the flesh the children of Israel left God. They chose to stand alone worshipping the god of Moab (Numbers 25:1-3). The leaders of the children of Israel were hanged for not leading the people to stand with God (Numbers 25:4). The leaders of the children of Israel and over twenty thousand others did not survive the temptation of the pride of life (Numbers 25:4,9).

“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents” (1 Corinthians 10:9). It seems that the children of Israel longed for the supposed comforts of Egypt. They complained of not having what they need despite being provided manna (Numbers 21:5). God sent venomous serpents to bite the complainers because the Israelites did not trust in His plan and power (Numbers 21:6). Indecently, it is of no small importance that the remedy for being bitten was to submit to God’s plan and trust His power (Numbers 21:8-9). The children of Israel desired (lusted) after the supposed comforts of Egypt and did not trust in God to provide. Much of Israel did not survive the temptation of the pride of life (Numbers 21:6).

“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Corinthians 10:10). Here Paul brings to mind when Kora and two hundred and fifty princes rebel and, instead of trusting in God, try to stand on their own (Numbers 16:1-2). The issue had to do with

Moses being appointed leader and Aaron being made High Priest (Numbers 16:3). God chose Moses and Aaron to lead the people. The people should have trusted in God's choice, as opposed to trusting in their own will and power. However, God was going to choose again to reassure the people (Numbers 16:41). What was the punishment for this rebellion and murmuring? Besides those who died in the matter of Kora, the death toll was fourteen thousand and seven hundred (Numbers 16:49). Rather than trusting in God to choose the leadership of the children of Israel, they chose. The ramification of the Israelites' choice to choose out their own leadership and not let God's choice stand was over fourteen thousand people did not survive the temptation of the pride of life (Numbers 16:49).

Trusting in self rather than in God is the golden thread which runs through these six examples from Paul's pen (1 Corinthians 10:5-10). The Israelites were clearly caught up in the sin of the pride of life. They had the attitude of "I know better, I can do it better, its all on me, I am standing alone in the face of all the troubles and trials of this world and I, alone, am responsible for my wellbeing" and if we are not careful, we will fall prey to the sin of the pride of life just like they did.

Now that the pride of life has been explained and exemplified, Christians must be able to eradicate this pride in their lives. As with the children of Israel, the only way eradicate the pride of life is to submit to the will of God and follow His plan. James gives very good advice for the purpose of eradicating the pride of life.

### **The Pride Of Life Eradicated**

James and John use the same stem word for "pride"

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and “boastings” (James 4:16). These men who are boasting are suffering from the pride of life. In order to survive the temptation of the pride of life, let us look at three truths James’ audience would have learned.

### ***We Have No Control***

James makes a statement, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow” (James 4:14a). This statement is directly connected to the verse before in which he writes, “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city...” (James 4:13a). James was writing about rich men (James 5:1). These rich men were foolish enough to think that they could plan very far ahead. They thought they were in control enough to declare with surety that they would travel into a far city. James pointedly reminds them that (whereas) what they think they know about tomorrow they actually do not know. Tomorrow is in someone else’s hands.

### ***We Have No Intrinsic Value***

James further humbles these rich men by giving them an explanation in the form of a question: “For what is your life” (James 4:14b)? Has someone ever asked the value of your life? I wonder if the men addressed by James ever compared their lives to the goods in which they put so much trust? Notice the comparison that James uses in the previous verse: “...we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell...” (Jas. 4:13b). So, James compares the lives of these rich men to that of their merchandise when he asks, “what is your life?” In the scheme of eternity the lives of these men without God is equal to, and maybe less than, the vapor that rises from a lake or a pond (James 4:14b).

These rich men were arrogant enough to think they could

predict the future and that what they owned would be found worthy by the citizens of the city to which they traveled to buy and sell. Do you think they had such a high opinion of themselves as self made men that they thought their lives were worth more than their goods? Their lives had no value in and of themselves. Neither did the rich men's goods have value outside the value assigned by the clientele in the far off city to which the men traveled. These men's value was linked to their own skill and merchandise.

James saw the folly of the pride of trusting in self and not God. Taking self inventory is difficult. It will manifest many character flaws. On the other hand, it can cause us to make certain changes that create a stronger foundation. I often wonder what the results of this self examination was.

### ***We Have No Substance***

The punch which deflates the last bit of air out of the over inflated ego of these rich men, James says, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14c). The answer to the question of the worth of these rich men's lives is equal to or less than the mist that rolls in of a morning rising up from a pond, bog, or lake. How much effect does that vapor have in the whole scheme of things? It's here for such a short amount of time. That fog that rises from a pond doesn't do anything profitable. It appears and would be very nutritious, as water vapor to plants, but it burns off too soon. Those rich men might have been able to get to the far city and stay there a year. However, getting gain was totally dependent upon the citizens of the city where they were selling their goods. They thought their lives were substantive. They thought that during their sojourn on this earth that they would profit it in some way so as to make a

lasting mark by turning a profit in business. Sadly, they were mistaken. There is only one glory that lasts, God's glory (1 Peter 1:24). Man has no substance in which to glory, except in God.

God's Word in James provides the solution to the pride of life. These men were caught up in the pride of life. They thought that they were in control of their lives, but they were forgetting one thing, they were forgetting that God is in control.

### ***The Answer From James***

James shows us three facts of life: we have no control, we have no intrinsic value, we have no substance. He writes, "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:14). James makes the point that because of the truth of these three facts of life we must give credit to the one who is in control, the one who gives value to our lives, and the one in whom we have substance, God. It is only in God that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). The answer to surviving the temptation of the pride of life is to acknowledge the power of God and to put God into our plans.

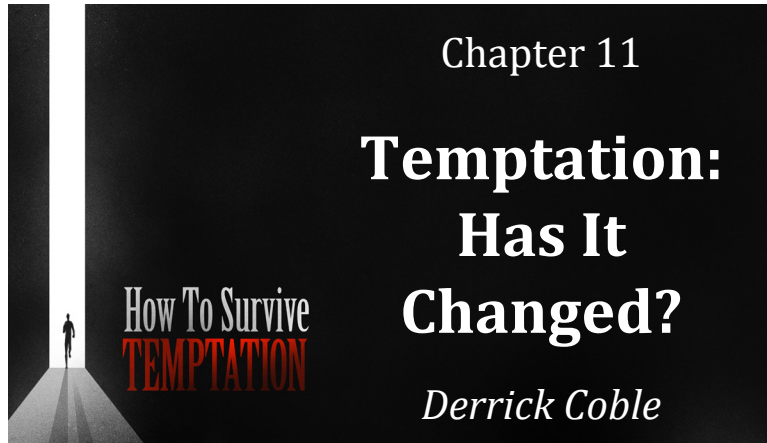
James aptly illustrates the ungodly attitude of the pride of life: "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (James 4:16). It is an evil thing to trust in ourselves. The remedy for the pride of life is to put our faith, trust, and hope in God. It is sin not to include God in our plans (James 4:17). The eradication of the pride of life comes from putting God in our plans (James 4:17). Trusting God to take care of us and knowing that if God wills, we will live in this world and make an impact.

### **Conclusion**

So, we have considered surviving temptation which comes from the pride of life. Explained, the pride of life is the attitude that I can do it all on my own and I don't need anyone, not even God. Exemplified, the pride of life is a type of self-idolatry because we think we are standing alone. The man who suffers from the pride of life is the man who has achieved the pinnacle of success in his life and is foolish enough to think he got there on his own. Eradicated, the pride of life is replaced with a godly pride understanding that God is in control of our lives and nothing we do is done unless it is by the will of God. Let us live to serve God the way God wants to be served. Let us live soberly, righteously, and Godly so as to avoid thinking we can do it all on our own falling prey to the temptation of the pride of life.

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### Introduction

**A**s strange as it may sound, the Bible is a book about temptation and sin (actions of rebellion against God). From the beginning of the Bible when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3) to the end of the Bible when the devil and all sinners are pictured being cast into the lake of fire at judgment (Revelation 20:10,15; 21:8), sin permeates the lives of men. One may say the Bible is about God and His relationship with man. Yet, that relationship requires atonement for sin by blood. God said, “for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). Thus, under Patriarchal Law, God required a blood sacrifice for sin as evidenced in the life of Abel and Job (Genesis 4:3-5; Job 1:5). Under Mosaic Law, God required daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices for sin; as well as, special days of sacrifice (Numbers 28). Under the New Covenant, God required the perfect blood sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, so we can receive cleansing and atonement (1 Peter 1:18,19; 1 John 1:7-9; Romans 5:11). One may say the Bible is a book about salvation and a Savior, but that implies a necessity to

be saved from something. What is it? It is nothing more than sin. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream concerning the pregnancy of Mary he said, “And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). So, the entire Bible deals with sin. But, before sin can be present in a person’s life, it is always preceded by temptation. This is true for anybody, anywhere, in any age of time as we all are presented with a choice between good and evil (Amos 5:14; Romans 12:9).

### **What Is Temptation?**

There are two basic ways that the word, “temptation” is used within the Scriptures: (1) An outward trial or test; (2) An inward enticement to sin. Concerning outward trials, the Old Testament Hebrew word, *nasah*, and the New Testament Greek word, *peirasmos* are essentially equivalent words for temptation meaning, “trying or proving” (Cross 1598). This usage is seen in the way that God tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1) and Israel tested God (Exodus 17:2). In the former example, God is seen proving the faith of Abraham by instructing him to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved son of promise. Abraham passes the test with great trust in God realizing that if he did sacrifice his son, God would be able to raise him from the dead (Hebrews 11:7-19). In the latter example, Israel tested God as they wandered in the wilderness accusing Moses of bringing them out there only to die of thirst. Even though God had always provided for their needs, their lack of faith is seen resulting in a trying of God’s longsuffering. This type of temptation is also mentioned in the New Testament where James says,

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience (James 1:2,3).

Therefore, sometimes temptation doesn't have anything to do with sin but everything to do with how we respond to the daily trials of life. For example, when we face persecution as the apostles did, will we rejoice with God or renounce Him (Acts 5:41)? If we are suffering at our jobs, in our homes, or in the community because we are Christians, will we continue to glorify God or give up on Him (1 Peter 4:15,16)? There are various hardships that each Christian will face; yet, every hardship and outward trial (temptation) is nothing new. We are not alone in the adversity that may be plaguing our lives. In fact, right now someone else is facing or has already overcome the exact same trials that we face today. That is why Paul told the Corinthians,

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 which ye are able (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The promise is that God will make a way for us to escape safely through to the other side and when we do, there is a great reward:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (James 1:12).

The second way that the term, "temptation" is used is in connection with the inward enticement to sin. Different from the testing that brings about faith and patience, this type of trial only brings about eternal death and hell. James records,

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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 1:14,15).

James tell us these temptations do not come from God (James 1:13) because He gives life not death (James 1:12). It has been said that these enticements to sin can be divided into three stages: suggestion, delight, and consent (Cross 1598). Some examples would include: David and his sin of adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-5), Ananias and Sapphira and their sins of lying and greed (Acts 5:1-10), and Demas with his sin of choosing to love the world over God (2 Timothy 4:10). Temptations like these are fueled by a person's own personal lust (desire) and only lead to sin and eternal separation from God (Revelation 20:10,15).

### **Where Did Temptation Originate?**

To understand why man is tempted to sin today, it is necessary to understand the origination of sin before the fall of man. It begins with the fact that God alone is eternal (Isaiah 40:28). He is the ever-existing one (I AM; Exodus 3:14) from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2). This means that everything else that exists, whether in heaven or on earth, was created (Colossians 1:16). With this in mind, there are only two classes of individuals who were created in the image of God having free will: angels and man (cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Genesis 1:26,27). The Bible is silent as to exactly when the angels were created. Nonetheless, everything was created in six days (Exodus 20:11) and the angels were present when God created the earth (Job 38:4,7).

Because the angels were created with free will, temptation actually began with a lust for heavenly power that

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resulted in sinful rebellion against God (2 Peter 2:4). Jude described it this way, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). These sinful angels did not keep “their first estate”—their “sphere of authority” (Louw 477) or “domain, sphere of influence” (Arndt 138) in Heaven. Thus, they were not willing to submit themselves to God and were led by one tempted with pride (1 Timothy 3:6) who took the first place as Satan “the prince of the devils” (Matthew 12:24). The result was that God cast all of them down to Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4) to await the judgment as they chose to become one of the Devil’s angels instead of God’s (Matthew 25:41). It was then that the process of temptation and sin truly began as an angelic lust for power conceived and gave birth to sin, resulting in eternal separation from God (James 1:15).

After this rebellion ensued, the Devil had his eyes set on humanity. God had created Adam and Eve on day six of creation week and presented them with a perfect home in Eden (Genesis 2:7,8; 23-25). To obey God, it took submission to His authority following one rule which He gave:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying,  
Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely  
eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and  
evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that  
thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis  
2:16,17).

At this point, man was content to follow God’s rule not having known temptation (enticement to rebel against God). As Henry Morris observed, “But before man could bring sin into the world, he must be persuaded to sin by an agent external to himself” (106). Unfortunately, this persuasion did come

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through one who had already experienced sinful rebellion. Satan, “the tempter” (1 Thessalonians 3:5), soon appeared through the means of a serpent. The temptation (like his own) was rooted in pride and power as he suggested to Eve that if she ate of the forbidden tree she would be like God knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). With this suggestion came delight in the idea, followed by consent of both the man and the woman, bringing sin and death into God’s perfect world. Thus, the apostle Paul would write, “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

### **How Is Man Tempted?**

Satan is described in the Scriptures in a variety of ways. He is the old serpent (Revelation 9:11; 12:9), an enemy (Matthew 13:28), a murderer (John 8:44), and the tempter (Matthew 4:3). As the tempter, he works throughout the world to draw people away from God. In fact, the Bible calls him “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and “the prince of this world” (John 12:31). This is true because the world is enthralled with sin and he manifests his influence over the world, as sinners choose to follow him rather than God.

Interestingly, what Satan offers through temptation only consists of three things. These three things are temporary and in direct contrast to the Almighty God. Notice what John wrote by inspiration:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For **all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts

thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth  
for ever (1 John 2:15-17; emphasis DC).

John declares that the world only consists of these three fleeting things and these are the only three areas by which man can be tempted. In fact, these are the very avenues in which Satan tempted Adam and Eve, as well as, Jesus.

In the case of Adam and Eve, Satan had to work subtly and craftily to make the newfound children of God believe that what was evil was actually good. Satan is very convincing at this because even though he is limited in his power, he knows what God looks like, he knows about the nature of God, and he knows what the angels are like. So, it is easy for him to transform into an angel of light in order to deceive (2 Corinthians 11:14). He did this by directly contradicting the Word of God and causing Eve to believe that God was holding back something extraordinary from her and her husband (Genesis 3:4,5). At that moment, the threefold enticements of the world began (Genesis 3:6). Eve first saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh). It looked delicious to eat. Second, the tree was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes). The fruit was a pleasure to look at. Third, the tree was desired to make one wise (pride of life). The fruit was desired to be like God. All of these were selfish and greedy cravings that suddenly overwhelmed Eve and Adam to defy the very words of their Creator and disobey His one simple command. Both the man and the woman deserved to die that very day; yet, God in His mercy allowed them to live for the moment while the process of death would eventually overtake them. They already had some sense of good and evil because they knew that obeying God's law was good and disobeying was evil, but Satan promised more. As a result of their believing the father of lies (John 8:44), all they received when their

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eyes were opened was shame, regret, sorrow, punishment, and death (Genesis 3:10,16,17,22,24).

Fortunately, another “Adam” would arise to withstand the temptations of the Devil and bring life back to the world. God declared, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Jesus the Savior would be born of the seed of woman (a virgin) and destroy the works of the Devil (Matthew 1:23; 1 John 3:8). Paul said, “And so it is written, The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Adam was brought forth into the world as sinless, but did not stay that way; however, the second Adam (Jesus) would be brought forth as sinless and withstand the threefold temptations of the world. John said, “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). Like Adam and Eve, Jesus was “in all points [lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life; DC] tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). When Satan appeared before Jesus, he brought his trifold of temptation without hesitation (Matthew 4). He would prove no match for the Son of God as Jesus used the power of the Scriptures each time (Romans 1:16; cf. Deuteronomy 6:8). Jesus endured the lust of the flesh when Satan tempted him to turn stones into bread (Matthew 4:3). This was after Jesus had fasted forty days and nights and was weak and hungry. Nonetheless, He knew that we are not self-sufficient and we depend upon the Father to provide. He trusted the Father and didn’t take matters into His own hands. Next, He endured the pride of life when Satan tempted Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (Matthew 4:6). Satan misapplied Psalm 91:11,12 using it to say that God would

protect the faithful from the smallest bit of danger. Jesus refused the temptation even though He could have shown His great power in front of many people. Finally, Jesus was tempted with the lust of the eyes by Satan offering Him all the kingdoms of the world if only He would worship Him (Matthew 4:9). This would have been a shortcut to the glory that Jesus would soon receive. Yet, He knew there were no shortcuts. He prophesied concerning His death, “Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day” (Luke 9:22). By refusing to succumb to these temptations (and others), He was qualified to be our Savior and perfect example (1 Peter 2:21,22).

### **Has Temptation Changed?**

From the garden of Eden until the present age, everyone is tempted. The temptations that we endure still fall under the same three categories in which Satan tempted Adam and Eve, Jesus, and all who have ever lived. There are lusts of the flesh that Satan uses from sexual desires to any selfish or greedy cravings to satisfy worldly lusts. It might cause a person to choose his job, profession, or business over Christ. It might cause one to break up his family due to fornication or adultery. These lusts must be denied (Titus 2:11,12). There are lusts of the eyes which tempt us to respond impulsively in various situations without self-control (cf. Genesis 13:10; 2 Samuel 11:2,3). This has been the downfall of many who have chosen to compromise the faith for what is seen in religions around the world. The Old Testament warning was given to Israel in order to keep them from compromising and worshipping the false gods of the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 6:14,15). The pride of life is also a temptation that Satan still uses throughout

the world to gain those who have a desire for more power, wealth, and possessions. Satan tempts us in this way to prove our superiority over others by saying foolish and hurtful things or possibly even refuse the Gospel of Christ. Temptation has not changed and never will! Satan has not changed and never will!

Therefore, it is a necessity that each Christian, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Satan is constantly lying in wait ready for us to put our guard down and have a weak moment so he can trap us with his trickery as he did Adam and Eve. He wants to distract us and discourage us so that ultimately we are defeated. But God has promised, “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). If we faithfully live for the Lord and daily wield the sword of the spirit (Ephesians 6:17) temptation can be overcome with Jesus by our side (Hebrews 13:5). Remember, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9).

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In the wilderness there are few truly safe places. Every environment, be it mountains, the sea, a forest, desert or tundra, is filled with dangers and predators lurking around every corner. Because of this, the young draw near their parents, animals travel in packs or herds, and the only way they can find rest is to first find shelter. In the animal kingdom these quiet times of rest are also times of feeding and grooming, which in turn prepares them for survival in the wild. However, because they are at their most vulnerable while eating, grooming, and resting, those who survive to old age have learned to “sleep with one eye open” and to “have eyes in the back of their heads.” I am convinced the same could be said for the mature Christian.

Worship is intended to be a time of drawing near to God and finding a place of rest where we can enjoy shelter from the storms of life (Psalm 27:5; 31:19-20; 32:6-8; 91:1-4; Isaiah 25:4). It is also a time when our souls are fed, giving us strength, and a time for self reflection and examination of our own spiritual standing with God (2 Corinthians 13:5). In worship we are invited to cast all our cares upon God because

He cares for us, however, He also warns us there is a predator who never sleeps, who never rests, and if he finds us “letting down our guard” in worship, he will pounce and devour us (1 Peter 5:6-8). In this writing we intend to explore some of the dangers and temptations we face in worship.

### **The Temptation To Be Seen Of Men**

As I type these words I am conscious of the fact that they will undergo numerous revisions and edits before reaching the printed page. Part of the process is to “justify” the margins. When you justify the margins it makes the writing look better on the printed page. Instead of jagged lines of differentiating lengths you get uniformity and a “cleanness” to the page. It looks good, it looks better, even though nothing has changed content wise. There is a lesson and a warning for us as it pertains to the temptations we face in worship to try and “justify” ourselves, rather than truly being “justified” by God.

In the parable of Luke 10 a lawyer (an expert in the Law of Moses) asked Jesus a question concerning the teachings of the Law on the subject of eternal life. A casual reading might seem familiar to us. Most certainly, at one time or another, we have asked questions about how to have eternal life, and it is likely we too have been asked that question. However, a closer examination reveals a few particulars that change our understanding of what is happening in this conversation. In an honor/shame culture like the Ancient Near East (hereafter referred to as ANE), which is the culture of the Israelites, “public questions were never for information. If one wanted information, you asked privately, as we often see Jesus’ disciples do (Matthew 24:3; Mark 9:28). Likewise, Nicodemus came at night because he didn’t want his question misunderstood. He was looking for answers from Jesus, not



honor. But public questions were contests” (Richards and O’Brien 129). You need not be familiar with ANE culture to see this is purpose of this conversation. Luke recognizes it and points it out to us, “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him...But he, willing to justify himself” (Luke 10:25, 29). Just like our motives in “justifying” the margins of this book, the lawyer wanted to make himself “look good.” This is a temptation that every disciple must guard against in worship.

In contrast with the motives of some of the religious people of His day, ones He identified as hypocrites, Jesus warned His disciples,

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest tine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward... And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward... Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward (Matthew 6:1-16).

The temptation to “be seen of men” in our worship is not limited to the desire to impress others with our worship in seeking their approval, it can also be rooted in the fear of wanting to please others with our worship because we fear their judgment. This is typically manifested in concerns over

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whether or not we are dressed like others (“Will they look down on me if I’m not wearing a suit and tie or a dress like them?”), use the same vocabulary as others (“Do they think my prayer is irreverent because I didn’t say ‘Thee’ and ‘Thou’?”), or have the same posture as others (“Will they think I’m ‘charismatic’ if I close my eyes while we sing this song?”). Regardless of the motive (to impress others or to fear their disapproval), do not be tempted to make anyone but God the audience of your worship.

### **The Temptation Of Isolation**

Although God alone is the audience of our worship, this doesn’t mean that others are irrelevant to our worship. While I would not make the argument that it is impossible to worship God alone, it is certainly the case that God intended for worship to be a communal activity. By saving us in the church (Acts 2:47), the Lord intended to make “community” a part of our spiritual life, growth, and worship.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?...But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (1 Corinthians 12:13-18).

God is the audience of our worship and He is pleased when the many members of the body of Christ are one. A concept that is frequently mentioned in the New Testament is the idea of the church “coming together” or “gathering together” or “assembling together” (1 Corinthians 11:33; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7). In fact, the first thing we are taught about the

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church after its beginning is that they came together in worship and service (Acts 2:41-47). The message of Scripture is loud and clear: God wants His people united together in every area of their lives, and that includes worship.

The temptation to isolate yourself from the church in worship, or in groups being isolated or estranged from one another in worship, usually comes as a result of conflict. Perhaps this is why Jesus was so emphatic in saying,

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

When you become estranged from your brother you often become estranged from your brethren.

Even if you continue to be present for worship gatherings, you cannot be connected to the Head of the church while being cut off from the body, as illustrated by the first letter to the church in Corinth. Paul makes this point in two different ways, the first of which is illustrated by the consequences of the division that existed within the body at Corinth. Paul began this letter addressing the primary problem at the heart of all the residual issues.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren...that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? (1 Corinthians 1:11-13).

Herein lies the problem, but its tentacles are far reaching and have begun to affect their worship.

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Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you...When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken... Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

Do not get distracted by the cultural traditions that differ from ours (the eating of a common meal, or "love feast" [Jude 1:12] in conjunction with the Lord's Supper) and miss the point that Paul is making: Although you are assembling together for worship you are not coming together as one body. You are coming together to separate and because of this you destroy one of the main purposes of worship, namely the uniting together around the table of the Lord to share with and worship Him. The Lord's table is a communion, a fellowship.

The second way Paul illustrates that you cannot be connected to the Head of the church while being cut off from the body is found in chapter five. A brother has severed his relationship with God through unrepentant fornication, and, by Paul's command, is being cut off from his fellowship with the family of God through corrective discipline.

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you...In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto

Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus...put away from among yourselves that wicked person (1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

If you are not in a relationship with God that allows for true worship then it is impossible to be in a relationship with God's people wherein you can worship acceptably. This example serves as an ideal segue into our final section.

### **The Temptation To Come Before God Unclean**

The book of Exodus comes to a close with a monumental problem: the tabernacle is finished, God is among His people, but they cannot approach Him to worship Him because they are sinful and unclean.

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35).

We are immediately ushered into the book of Leviticus, which begins by restating the problem ("the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation," Leviticus 1:1), but then proceeds to teach the Israelites how to overcome this problem. Leviticus is a manual for the Israelites to know how to atone for their sins and become ceremonially pure so that they may approach God in worship. When the book of Leviticus closes, and the book of Numbers begins, the problem has been solved. "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation" (Numbers 1:1). These books set a precedent that all worshippers of God in every

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generation should consider: it is dangerous to come into the presence and holiness of God in a sinful manner or without atoning for your sins.

Two stories from the Old Testament dramatically demonstrate this first fact. The first example comes very early in the book of Leviticus when two priests, who are also the sons of the high priest, and nephews of Moses, approach God in an unauthorized way. Their heritage and their position was irrelevant in relationship to God's holiness.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace (Leviticus 10:1-3).

The second example is hundreds of years later but the ending is the same.

And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased...And David was afraid of the LORD (2 Samuel 6:6-9).

While there may be a few things about this event that confuse, and possibly, like David, "displease" us, one thing should be

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noted: the ark of God was not being transported according to the instructions God gave them in Numbers 4:5-15. His intentions were irrelevant in relationship to God's holiness.

The Old Testament is filled with examples of God's people facing serious consequences for not taking the sanctity and holiness of worshipping God seriously. It is not just approaching God in an unacceptable manner that is problematic, approaching God without atoning for your sins is equally dangerous. One of Isaiah's more hostile sermons keys in on this very point.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to heart them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear (Isaiah 1:11-15).

If the King James language confuses you, allow me to translate. God said I hate your worship, do not worship me anymore, why are you even bothering to worship me? If you aren't familiar with the condition of Israel at this time in history you might be very confused. God commanded all of these things that He is now saying He hates. Notice carefully the last few words of Isaiah's sermon, "...your hands are full

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of blood” (Isaiah 1:15). The problem wasn’t the sacrifices, or the holy days or the manner in which they worshipped God; it was their sinful living that was the problem.

What would be your reaction if you went to a restaurant and ordered your meal, only to witness the cook picking his nose and scratching his head and biting his fingernails and cleaning out his ears while he prepared your food? How would you respond if after doing all these gross things and touching your food, he slid the plate to you and said, “Here you go, enjoy!”? I feel confident that you would be repulsed and push the plate away. “I don’t want this” you might say to him. “But you ordered it. This is what you wanted” he might reply, and it’s true, you did want it and you did order it but because of the behavior of the cook you were disgusted by what he offered you. This was God’s problem with Israel. They may have been following the prescription in the Law for how and what God wanted offered to Him, but they paid no attention to their own conduct and behavior in offering it. They were guilty of wickedness and injustice, debauchery and corruption. Their hands were unclean so Isaiah tells them,

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:16-17).

When Isaiah himself was brought into the presence of God on His throne in a vision, witnessing the angels themselves worshipping Him, Isaiah was humbled and aware of his own sinfulness.

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it



stood the seraphims...And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory...Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Isaiah 6:1-5).

Lest we think this only applied to worship under the Law of Moses, consider Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3,

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Although God demands that we follow His instructions for how to approach Him in worship, do not be tempted to think that as long as you are worshipping according to the pattern that your lifestyle, conduct, and attitude are irrelevant.

For the child of God, worship is a place of reverence, fear, humility, joy, exuberance, gratitude, peace, safety, rest, and love. However, it can also be a dangerous place. Tragically we have seen in recent years in places like Sutherland Springs, Texas, Nashville, Tennessee, and Charleston, South Carolina, that the adversary has used worship gatherings as a time to devour the lives of worshippers through acts of terroristic violence. As awful as these acts are, these aren't the only threats that Christians face in worship. Far more believers

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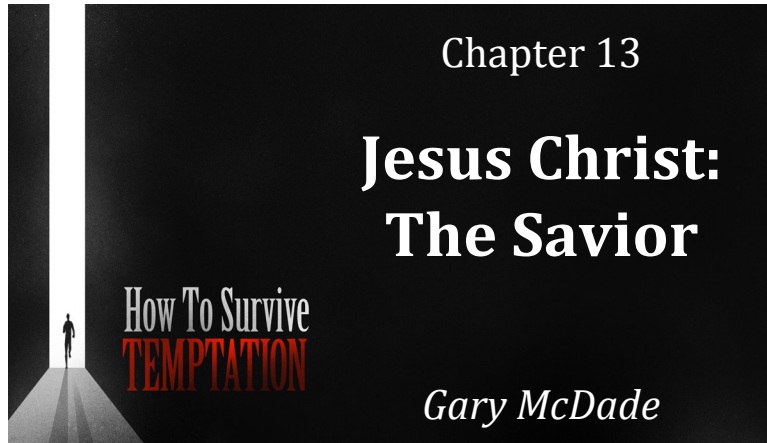
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will succumb to the temptation in worship to please men, or allow division to separate God's people, or continue living in sin, than will ever have to look down the barrel of a gun during worship.

...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. Do not err, my beloved brethren (James 1:14-16).

### **Works Cited**

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**T**he opening chapter of the New Testament records the angel of the Lord telling Joseph regarding Mary, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). And, with this statement the New Testament begins to reveal “Jesus Christ: The Savior” to the world. But, the concept of “Jesus Christ: The Savior” emerged not only before the New Testament was written or even before the Old Testament was written but before the world itself began. The apostle Peter wrote about this,

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God (1 Peter 1:18-21; cf. also Revelation 13:8).

Note the context in which Peter affirmed that Jesus as the Savior “was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” One, his audience was living an empty life in following the traditions of their forefathers and trusting in them for salvation from sin. Two, corruptible things, regardless of their value like silver and gold, do not have the power to redeem a person from sin. Three, the sinless and precious blood of Christ was required for a sinner to be “bought back” or redeemed out of sin. And, four, Jesus was made manifest in these last times for those who believe in God, who raised Jesus up from the dead and gave Him glory, in order that faith and the hope of salvation might reside in God.

Therefore, from eternity past God planned for “Jesus Christ: The Savior” to shed His sinless and precious blood to redeem sinners from eternal ruin. Paul in Hebrews gives clarity to the need for Jesus to shed His blood one time on the cross in order to bear the sins of many. Paul wrote,

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this

the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:22-28).

The blood of Christ flowed backward from the cross to the beginning of time and flows forward to the end of time to redeem sinful man. Christ's blood was shed in His death on the cross (John 19:33-35) and by doing so He redeemed the transgressions committed under the Old Testament therefore validating all the authorized animal sacrifices offered according to God's Will (Hebrews 9:15). The blood of Christ was used to purchase the church of Christ (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25), and those added to it by baptism (Acts 2:38, 41, 47) were chosen "before the foundation of the world" as a group or class known as the church of Christ. Not individually but collectively, the church of Christ. Paul expressed thanksgiving for this provision when he said,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Ephesians 1:3-8).

Those whom God chose, them He also called by the gospel of Christ. Paul explained,

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But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Biblical predestination (the word appears four times, Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, 11) refers to God determining before the foundation of the world the classification or qualification of those who would be saved, not the individuals but the group, that is, the church of Christ. These are the ones who answered the call of the gospel. Paul goes further along this line,

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8:29-30).

Preaching “Jesus Christ: The Savior” is the central message of the gospel of Christ. Paul referred to it as a “grace,” when he said,

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom

of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:8-11).

God's "purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord" arises out of the depths of eternity past and proceeds, from our perspective, into eternity yet future.

The central character of the entire Bible is "Jesus Christ: The Savior." Hebrews 10:5-7 says,

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God (cf. also Psalm 40:7).

The central theme of all the Bible is the salvation of mankind accomplished exclusively through the redemptive work of "Jesus Christ: The Savior" in concert with the eternal Will of God (Luke 19:10; Matthew 18:11).

Jesus is the Savior because the Bible tells us so.

### **Jesus Christ: The Savior In The *Protoevangelium***

The word "protoevangelium" means "the first mention of the gospel" and points forward from Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. taught concerning the protoevangelium:

The message is not just to the serpent but for man's beautiful benefit primarily. Enmity would now exist between the woman and the serpent—not

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familiar discourse as did exist prior to Eve's fall. This enmity will be between thy seed and woman's seed. Woman's seed has special reference to the coming Messiah. He would be virgin-conceived and virgin-born (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22, 23). He would be the seed of woman and made of a woman as expressed by Paul in Galatians 4:4. Conflicts would be severe and of long duration between the force of truth and the foes of falsehood. Christ would bruise the head of the serpent, the devil. Satan would bruise Christ's heel in efforts to destroy him such as with the Roman crucifixion. By the amazing atonement of Calvary and the triumphant resurrection Christ would destroy the works of the devil (Cf. 1 John 3:8; Heb. 1:14, 15). (Taylor 61).

Jesus is the Savior because through His death, burial, and resurrection He has destroyed the works of the devil.

### **Jesus Christ: The Savior Is The Priest**

A deeper understanding of what it means for Jesus to be the Savior is acquired in looking into what the Bible teaches about Him being the Priest. Remember when Abraham's nephew, Lot, got caught in the crossfire between the four kings against five kings in Genesis 14? Lot was taken captive by the alliance of the four kings headed up by Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, when they defeated the five kings headed up by the King of Sodom and the King of Gomorrah and took Lot all the way to Dan. Abraham, called at the time Abram, "armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them to Dan" (v. 14). A meeting of greater significance than is realized by the return celebration of victory over "the slaughter of Chedorlaomer"



took place in the Valley of Shaven, “which is the King’s Valley [NKJV].” The King of Sodom went out to meet Abraham. The celebratory atmosphere was heightened by the fact that Abraham “brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people” (v. 16). And, at this meeting in the Valley of Shaven a person by the name of Melchizedek [OT]/Melchisedec [NT] received tithes of Abraham. Moses elaborated,

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all (vv. 18-20).

Three observations are crucial to an appreciation of “Jesus Christ: The Savior is the Priest” from this text. One, Melchizedek was King of Salem. Two, Melchizedek was Priest of the most high God. And, three, Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham.

Melchizedek is infrequently mentioned in the Bible, only eleven times—two in the Old Testament and nine in the New Testament—but his connection with “Jesus Christ: The Savior” is vital to the character and official office of Jesus Christ as not only Priest, but moreover as High Priest. Note first the Messianic prophecy of the resurrection of Christ in Psalm 110:1-4:

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,

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in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

This passage establishes the Messianic connection between the priestly order of Melchizedek and “Jesus Christ: The Savior.”

A traditional list of the Jewish High Priests yields the number 82 from Aaron to the last Jewish High Priest at the time of the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, when a man by the name of Phinehas, the son of Samuel, was appointed by the people during the Jewish Wars with Rome in A.D. 66 (Josephus 219-221; 425-429). This is the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood. Jesus could never serve within this priesthood because He descended through the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:13-14; 8:4). So, the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ is not after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchizedek. And, the Aaronic Priesthood was never designed for a priest to abide continually or permanently in the priesthood, but, in contrast, the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ is a permanent position (Hebrews 7:23-24, 28). So, in regard to their priesthood both Melchizedek and Christ were “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Hebrews 7:3). Therefore, “the son of God; abideth a priest continually.”

Those three observations listed earlier that provide an overview of the Melchizedek order of High Priest of which Jesus is a part prove Jesus would be King and Priest at the same time and based on the fact that Levi descended from Abraham and Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the High Priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to the High Priesthood of Levi and all the priests who descended from him as Paul

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explains in Hebrews 7:1-10. Therefore, the High Priesthood of Christ is superior to that of the Levitical system of worship in the Old Testament. The imperfection of the Levitical priesthood is proven in part because of the need for and the existence now of another priesthood to replace it: the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ (vv. 11, 15). (For more of the details of the order of Melchizedek see Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, and 21). But, one detail relevant to the study of “Jesus Christ: The Savior” is made in Hebrews 7:27, “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” Jesus was without sin, and serving as our High Priest “became us [was fitting for us, NKJV], who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (v. 26). When He offered up Himself on the cross to atone for our sins, God accepted His sacrifice and the means by which sins could be taken away was forever established. The Messianic Prophet Isaiah foretold of this most significant Bible truth in Isaiah 53:

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. **He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:** by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and

made intercession for the transgressors (vv. 10-12, emphasis added).

Jesus is the Savior and our High Priest because He offered Himself on the cross for our sins and officiates in our worship today as our High Priest in the church of Christ, which is an holy temple unto the Lord (Ephesians 2:21).

### **Jesus Christ: The Savior Is The Prophet**

God was speaking of Jesus Christ when He said to Moses,

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

We know God was referring to Christ when he made this prophetic statement to Moses because the inspired apostle Peter quoted God's statement in Acts 3:22-23:

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

Since a prophet is one who speaks for another (Exodus 7:1) and Christ is speaking for God, everyone should be interested and eager to both hear what He has to say in His Word, the Bible, and use every energy of his being to do what the Lord

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requires (Matthew 7:21-28; John 12:48-49; Colossians 3:16-17). Jesus spoke not as one of the scribes but “as one having authority” (Matthew 7:28). Truly, Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18). God’s affirmation about the authority of Jesus as the Prophet carries with it great and grave consequences for those in ignorance (Acts 17:30) and indifference (Revelation 3:15-16). As Paul wrote,

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

Jesus is the Savior because He is the Prophet speaking for God through His Word to us today and holds all people accountable for seeking Him out and hearing what He has to say.

### **Jesus Christ: The Savior Shall Show The Potentate**

In one of his elegant flourishes of beautiful language wherein he urges Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith,” the apostle Paul wrote,

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate [Sovereign,

McCord's], the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen (1 Timothy 6:13-16).

Potentate is “one who wields great power or sway” (Webster’s 921). Sovereign is “the most exalted...superlative in quality...possessed of supreme power” (Webster’s 1128). In New Testament Greek “Potentate” and “Sovereign” translate the word *δυναστης* meaning “ruler, king, or Lord” (Newman 49).

The prophet Nathan foretold the greatness of David as would be revealed through his descendant, Jesus Christ,

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The prophet Isaiah affirmed of the Messiah:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The

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Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The prophet Daniel foretold when the Messiah's kingdom would come:

And in the days of these kings [the Romans, 63 B.C. to A.D. 138] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Daniel 2:44).

“Jesus Christ: The Savior” during His earthly ministry promised to build His church which is His kingdom, in perfect harmony with all the Old Testament prophets said of Him (Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1). And, accomplishing the design of the Sovereign Lord He did just that! (Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-4, 47; Romans 16:16).

Jesus is the Savior because He alone “shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:13-16).

### **Conclusion**

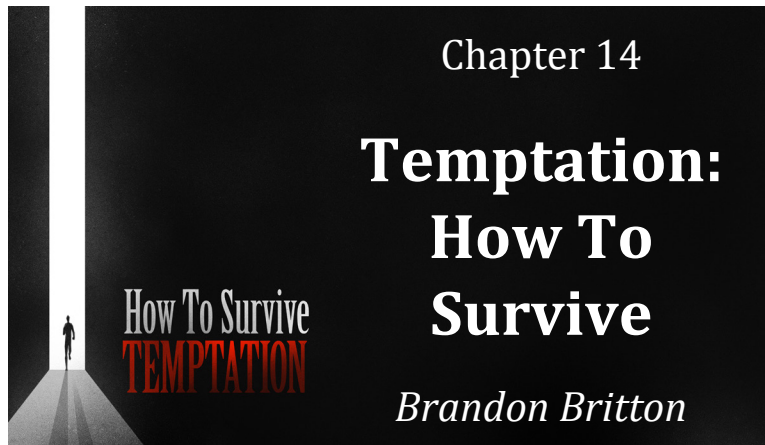
“Jesus Christ: The Savior” “tasted death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). The blood He shed on the cross “for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28) flowed all the way back

to the Garden of Eden to cleanse the very first sin and flows out to the end of time to cleanse those who sin in the future. The good news of the gospel is promoted and perpetuated through the Bible permanently (Matthew 24:35) being its singular theme (Hebrews 10:5-7). From the earliest expression of “Jesus Christ: The Savior” in the Protoevangelium through His roles as Priest, Prophet, and the One who shall show the Potentate we are so thankful to have “Jesus Christ: The Savior.”

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In recent years there has been a significant increase in interest concerning survival. The entertainment world has been quick to cash in on the survival craze with television shows like “Man Vs. Wild” and “Survivor” and countless others similar programs. The survival craze is so popular, judging by their content, it seems the History Channel and the Discovery Channel should actually combine and be renamed the Survival Channel. All of this makes some sense when you consider that survival is perhaps our single greatest instinct, whether you are talking about the animal kingdom, bacteria and viruses, or humans. These programs appeal to our most basic instinct, and is something that is relatable to people of all ages, races, and economic backgrounds.

As for what we have to do and need to survive, the threats and dangers seem to be limitless. A Google book search of “Survival Guide” reveals literally thousands of books on topics like “How To Survive...” a zombie apocalypse, the Trump presidency, a divorce, parenting a two year old, cancer, and life as a celebrity. Some of these threats are things that most of us will face, others are things that few of us will

face, and some are things I cannot help but think no one will actually ever have to endure. However, the focus of this study is something that everyone will have to face in life: temptation. With this in mind, it would certainly benefit everyone, but especially those who have made a commitment to following the path of Jesus, to know how to survive temptation.

### **Understand The Difference**

One of the most difficult things to identify in the written word is nuance. Nuance is defined as, “a subtle difference in or shade of meaning.” Words are like objects, they may have a primary intended use, but they can also be used for many other things. A shoelace was obviously intended to be used to lace up shoes, but you have likely used one other purposes as well, and the same is true with language. The same word can be used differently depending upon things like context, intent, common usage, and even slang. There’s actually a word for this: polysemy. Take, for example, the word “bank.” Bank can refer to a financial institution, the building that houses a financial institution, something you can rely upon (as in, “You can bank on it”), or to the sloping of the ground (as in, “We sat by the bank of the river”, although this usage is technically a homonym).

We frequently encounter this nuance in our religious conversations. There is the New Testament word “ekklesia” (which is usually translated into English as “church”), that is a reference to the “called out” or the “spiritual body of believers.” However, most of us refer to attending a gathering of the church for worship as “going to church.” Even more, we refer to the place where we assemble for worship as “the church.” Imagine the confusion if we used all three at once. “I’ll meet you at the church to have church with the church.”

In recent years another slang use for church has found its way into our vernacular. “Church” is now being used as a synonym for “truth.” The point is, we understand there is nuance in how a word gets used in typical communication.

I mention this because it is certainly true of the word “temptation” in Scripture. When most people hear the word “temptation” they interpret it to mean “a desire to do something wrong.” Typically this isn’t a problem, but many a Christian has encountered confusion when reading the book of James and encountering two different uses of the word “temptation” in the first chapter.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations...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...do not err my beloved brethren (James 1:2-16).

It only grows more confusing if you incorporate other passages where the word “temptation” is found. “Pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Luke 22:40). So which is it, am I supposed to rejoice in temptation or pray that I don’t enter into temptation? The key to dissolving the confusion is to understand the different ways in which the word “temptation” is used in Scripture.

It is worth mentioning that we must be careful not to assume our contemporary uses of words are the same as their usage in the Bible. If, as is the case in James 1, the way we understand and use a word today obviously contradicts what is a clear teaching throughout Scripture, we might want to dig a little deeper. In such a case it is likely the modern use of the word has changed from the ancient use of the word.

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This is where tools such as a modern English translation or a Bible dictionary or lexicon can be very helpful, however it isn't necessary for us to get into the technicalities of the Greek language or grammar to illustrate the different uses of this word in James 1. In his first usage of the word James is referencing something that is: to be welcomed with joy (v. 2), produces aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (v. 3, patience, Galatians 5:22), and is clearly something that God intends to use for your maturing. Additionally, built into the conversation is a definition of how James is intending to use the word "temptation." James says the type of temptation that we should welcome with joy is one that is a "trying" of your faith (v. 3). If we substituted the word "tempt" with a word like "trial" or "testing" it would likely clarify any misconceptions. God most certainly works in our lives to purify us from lingering sins or remove from our hearts bad habits and attitudes. James illustrates a spiritual principle that we recognize in the physical realm: resistance plus endurance produces strength.

In his second use of the word James is clearly referencing something very different from verse two. In verse thirteen he speaks of something that: is evil (v. 13), lures us away (v. 14), is born of lust (v. 14), results in sin and death (v. 15), we are warned not to wander away into (v. 16). Just as with verses two and three, in this section there is language that makes it clear James is referring to something different with this use of the word "temptation." The use of "temptation" in verse thirteen is in conjunction with evil and verse fourteen adds to it the element of enticement and being lured away. This usage is more in line with our contemporary use of the word "temptation" in that both refer to being enticed to do evil that leads to destruction, whereas verses two and three refer to being tested for the purpose of growth.

Simply put, not all temptation is created equal. The trials and testing we must undergo to produce spiritual fruit and reach maturity are orchestrated by God for our benefit and His glory. In contrast, the enticement to wickedness, which we fall victim to when we allow our lusts and desires to direct our steps, will ultimately lead us away from God and result in death instead of life. Perhaps the most important tool in surviving temptation is the ability to identify the difference between God working to purify us through difficulties and struggles, and Satan seeking to lead us away from God and into destruction.

### **Understand The Source**

Perhaps the most clear and emphatic statement James makes in this entire letter concerns the source of our temptations, or better yet, what is not the source of our temptation. “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” (James 1:13). Interestingly, it was a questioning of the goodness of God that was the source of the first temptation and eventual sin. The serpent initiates a conversation with a question about what God had said. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden” (Genesis 3:1). He further pushed the issue by subtly insinuating that God was a liar. “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:3-4). The last phase of his attack came by suggesting that God wasn’t actually protecting them from death, but preventing them from becoming like Him. “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). The irony of this statement is

that Adam and Eve were already like God. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

This is our first example of a warning that Jesus would later give us concerning Satan.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Jesus would later elaborate and call him a thief whose desire is to “steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). Murderer, liar, thief. What the serpent did with Adam and Eve he desires to do with us. Steal, kill, destroy. He is the source of the temptations which are designed to draw us away from God and lead us to death (James 1:14-15). Later in this same letter, which we will discuss more fully in the next section, James concentrates on the lust in our own hearts which empowers the tempter to lure us away. In a final, dramatic, declaration he tells us, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). There can be little doubt as to whom James considers the source of temptation: the devil. However, the next section will illustrate that the only power the devil yields is that which we give to him.

### **Understand The Cause**

Near the end of the letter James poses a question, that he immediately answers, which might be of some use to us in understanding the source of our temptations.

From whence come wars and fightings among you?  
Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war

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in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts...Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (James 4:1-5).

Perhaps something jumped out to you while reading those verses: your lusts (v. 1), ye lust (v. 2), your lusts (v. 3), the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth (v. 5). Just because the words are separated by several chapter and verse divisions, don't miss the fact that within the context of this same letter James said, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). For James there is a very clear cause for temptation and that cause is our own lust. Knowing this enables us to prepare for the attacks of the evil one because we know his "playbook."

In the days leading up to the College Football National Championship in January there was some internal concern for the Alabama football team due to defensive line coach Karl Dunbar's backpack, containing the game day playbook, being stolen. Despite the ultimate outcome of victory for the Crimson Tide, the fear that the opponent might have access to the playbook was significant. If the opponents knew exactly what Alabama planned to do and how they planned to do it, they would be at a serious advantage. Knowing the opponents plays and plans would enable you to prepare for their attacks, and the same is true for us concerning our adversary. We know how he plans to attack us. He plans to draw us away from God through enticement, using our own lustful desires as the bait. How does knowing this help us? It doesn't make the temptations easier to resist, but it certainly makes them easier to avoid.

Although we are all tempted in the same three areas (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life, 1 John 2:16), we are not all tempted specifically the same. A seventy year old woman and a sixteen year old boy will both be tempted by the enemy, and both will be drawn away of their own lust, but what they lust for is likely very different. In twenty years of ministry I have listened to countless people describe the ways in which their faith is under attack from Satan. Often I can relate to them completely. I understand their struggle because I too have faced those same temptations dressed in my own selfish desires. At other times I cannot relate at all. Some of the ways in which my brethren have described being tempted, or things they are wrestling with have absolutely no appeal to me. I'm not "better" than them, "stronger" than them, or "more spiritual" than them, I'm just different from them.

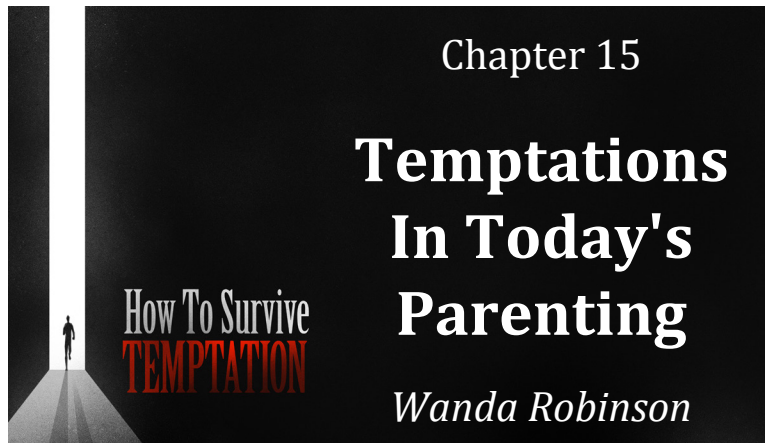
As hard as it is for me to comprehend, I know several people who do not like sweets or sugary desserts. If I am trying to eat healthy and you put a cupcake in front of me it will be a real internal struggle to resist it, but others would turn up their nose and walk away without a second thought. The same is true with different temptations. It isn't so important that I know what your desires are, but I absolutely better know what mine are because they are precisely the avenue through which he will seek to lure me away from God.

Through trial and error you have probably become very familiar with your own areas of personal weakness, or what James refers to as "your own lusts." The list of possibilities is as diverse as people: gossip, jealousy, greed, illicit sexual desires, anger. The list could go on for pages. If you know what areas you struggle with you can craft a game plan to thwart attacks using these temptations. Someone who feels a strong



pull to gossip or backbite might want to avoid people who love to engage in the same sinful discussions. Additionally you might want to bow out of conversations that venture from the realm of edification into destructive dialogue. If greed, materialism, and covetousness are your weaknesses it might be best to avoid flipping through catalogs, going to the mall just to browse, or scrolling through retail websites. There is always something “new and improved” that you “must have” or “can’t live without.” If you recognize that your temper has a tendency to cross the line or that you seem to be perpetually angry, maybe you need to turn off the cable news channel that keeps you “stirred up” with their latest “outrage of the day” topic. It could be that you need to steer clear of social media or be selective about the people you “friend” or the sites you visit if they only serve to incite you to rage. For those battling with sexual temptations you will need to be very selective about where you go and what you view. It may even be necessary to take additional steps with internet “purity programs” or accountability such as shared computer privileges with open access for your spouse or parents. The important thing isn’t how you prepare for the attacks, but that you recognize how you will most likely be tempted and take preemptive measures to protect yourself. Although not in the Bible book of the same name, there is an old proverb which reminds us, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”





Wouldn't it be nice if all of our families were always happy and faithful and living as God desires? James Keller is quoted in the book *Thanks for Being a Mom* as saying, "Every mother has the breathtaking privilege of sharing with God in the creation of new life. She helps bring into existence a soul that will endure for all eternity" (52). God has given parents the tremendous responsibility of showing our children how to live faithful Christian lives so they can live with Him throughout eternity. Our purpose is to prepare our children for Christian living. Unfortunately, in our society today, we see parents relinquishing their responsibilities and letting the temptations of the world pull them away from being the kind of parents God desires.

Raising a faithful child will not be achieved by chance. We have heard Ephesians 6:4 all of our lives where we are directed to "...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Bringing up our children in a way pleasing to God takes work on our part; it takes dedication and perseverance. What are the responsibilities of parents to children?

### **Love Your Children**

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children (Titus 2:3,4).

Our first responsibility is to love our children. Isn't it sad that women must be encouraged to love their children? We hear examples every day of mothers who simply do not care about their children. Just a few months ago we heard on the news about the woman who wanted to teach her toddler children a lesson so she left them in a hot car while she went in the house, smoked marijuana and took a two-hour nap, leading to their deaths. Children need love and care. Parents are tempted today to neglect their children in order to follow their own selfish desires. Some children are raising themselves because their parents are not willing to give up their pleasures, their addictions, and their greed to show their children love. Will our children know we love them if we ignore them? Will they feel loved if we are too busy satisfying our own desires to tend to their needs? What about those parents who are tempted to lose all self-control and scream at their children all the time? Will those children feel loved? We must let our children know by our words and actions that we love them.

### **Train Your Children**

The familiar Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." It is our responsibility as parents to train our children and to teach them to discern right from wrong. *Webster's New World Dictionary* gives one definition of train as "to direct the growth of" (1545). Think of the little Japanese bonsai tree

that is cut to make it grow in the desired shape. As we direct our children's growth, we need to guide them physically so we give them foods that are good for them. Parents help their children grow mentally as we read to them and take an interest in their schooling. Children also need our training spiritually.

Our children's spiritual training must take a high priority. We see an example of spiritual training with Lois and Eunice teaching Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). Teaching our children the sacred writings is an important part of their training which should be done in the home. This training takes time. We must not let the cares of this world tempt us to neglect this important aspect of our children's lives.

How do we train our children? To achieve our goals in parenting, we must develop the skills of good communication. James 1:19 reminds us to be "slow to speak, slow to wrath." This should be a byword for all Christian parents. One of the most frequent difficulties that families have is the problem of communication. Effective communication involves four things—talking, listening, feeling and understanding. We must watch the way we talk. Often we talk before we think. We say "no" to a question before we think it through. When asked why, we say, "Because I said so." That may work with little children, but it won't suffice with teenagers. "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs 29:20). We should make sure we are slow to speak. We should give ourselves time first to think about what we are going to say and then say it in the right way, "seasoned with grace and love" (Colossians 4:6).

Second, communication involves listening, not with half an ear while we are on our iPads or cell phones or laptops, but with both ears, attentively. That means when we are tempted to pay more attention to our Facebook page or our texts than

to our children, we stop and realize what is truly important. Is it the new recipe on Facebook or the post about the new restaurant in town? Or is it our children? We should do a lot of listening and less talking. Remember we have one mouth, but two ears. Listen to your children as you would anybody else. Respect their ideas and value their judgments and opinions. If we want our children to grow and mature to be able to stand up for their faith, we must provide a sounding board where our children are free to say what they are really thinking without fear of being put down or ridiculed.

A third area of communication is feeling. Sometimes we listen to the words our children say, but we miss the feeling behind the words. Your child may say, "I hate that old teacher," but what he really means is "I'm having trouble with that subject." Really listening to the feeling behind the words may help you know what he is truly trying to say.

A fourth area of communication takes feeling one step further to the need for understanding. We all want others to understand us and to see things from our point of view. We must make a real effort to understand what our children are trying to tell us and not discourage them from sharing their ideas with us.

Communication is not just words. Sometimes words get lost between my mouth and your ears. It is listening with the heart as well as with the ears. It is spending time listening to words and feelings and trying to understand. It is not getting the other person to do what we want, it is valuing each other and sharing our thoughts. Work on developing good skills of communication so you can keep in touch with your children. Love your children enough that you are willing to discuss difficult topics in a loving, Christian manner.

### **Discipline Your Children**

As Christian parents we have the responsibility of disciplining our children. There are many different thoughts on discipline, especially in our society today. Often it is easier to turn a blind eye to problems and pretend they don't exist. Eli evidently did this and was rebuked for failing to discipline his sons (1 Samuel 3:13). We may be tempted to blame others—teachers, friends, society—for our children's misbehavior and, therefore, fail to administer discipline. Others lean too far the opposite direction and may physically abuse their children. Both extremes are harmful to the children.

Proverbs 29:17 admonishes us to “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest...”. Discipline includes everything that helps your child develop character: saying “no, no” to a toddler, spanking within reason, sending a child to his room, having a long talk with a child, and taking away privileges. Children respond differently to discipline. One little swat on the behind might be enough to keep one child from ever writing on the walls again, while another child might not be influenced by it at all. A child's age, personality, and the offense must be taken into account before a method of discipline can be decided. What works with a 2-year-old won't work on a 10-year-old. What works on a 10-year-old won't apply to a teenager. What is appropriate for a childish prank won't be appropriate for outright disobedience.

### **Remember Who Is The Parent**

Another responsibility we have to our children is to remember who is the parent. As our children age, they become more and more independent. They make more of their own decisions, but as parents we still have the final word. We must not let them rule the roost. God expects us to make important

decisions on their behalf, to still be the parent. The older a child becomes, the more his viewpoint should be taken into consideration, but as the parent you still have the responsibility to make the decisions that affect your family. A child, even a teenager, simply doesn't have the wisdom, knowledge, or maturity to make some decisions. You are still the parent and you are in control, not your child. You have the right to have certain rules that must be followed for the good of your child and your family. The temptation may be to be your child's friend, but you are the parent. Your child still needs you to be in ultimate control, continuing to lead him in the right path.

### **Set The Right Example**

We need to be careful that we set the right example for our children by our own lives. One way we do that is by letting God's Word fill our lives. You can read books by Dr. Spock or Dr. Dobson and other renowned authors on the skills needed to parent children, but none of them can take the place of the Bible. When put into practice, the words of the Bible can determine the direction of your life and your children's lives. Proverbs 30:5 tells us that every word of God is pure. Our trust must be in His Word.

God's Word has the power to change our lives and to be our guide as we try to show our children the way to live. We must know it and we must live it. We must show our obedience to God in our own lives. Practice what you preach! Resist temptations! If we don't, our children will be the first to pick up on it. Our children must see us living the Christian life and obeying the Word of God. We must let God's Word lead us in our own lives and in directing our children.

Obviously we can't turn to the Scriptures and find multiple examples of women teaching their adolescents about



God. There is really not much written in the Bible about children. But we do see Hannah's family going to worship, making faith and obedience a priority. When baby Samuel was old enough, Hannah traveled with her husband and son to the temple to worship (1 Samuel 1:24). We see whole households obeying the Gospel (Acts 16:15). We must show our children our faith by our actions.

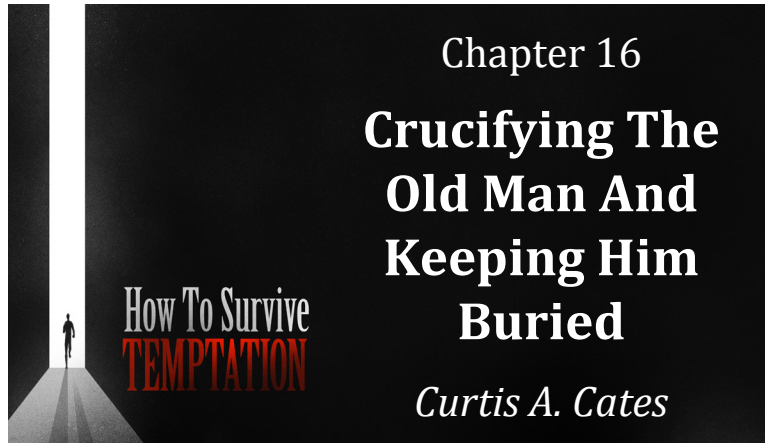
Setting the right example also means being a woman of prayer, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul might have had parents in mind when he penned that. Manoah's wife had been told she would bear a son. Because Manoah and his wife realized they needed help, Manoah asked God to send someone to tell them what to do for the boy (Judges 13:8). That's what we need to do—ask God for help and He will provide.

If we want our children to be faithful to the Lord, we need to be passionate about Christianity in our families. We need to talk about our faith each day, worship regularly, and engage in Christian activities. We must resist the temptations that prevents us from being faithful in our role as Christian parents. We can raise our children in a way pleasing to God if we let Him permeate everything we do and say.

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### Introduction

**T**o sin is to miss the mark [*hamartia*]; it is to violate God's law; it is to commit lawlessness (1 John 3:4). God's law, His inspired Word, is based upon His own nature—His absolute holiness, His absolute separation from evil and sin. When a person reaches the age of responsibility and transgresses God's holy will, that person is **separated** from God by sin (Isaiah 59:1-2; Habakkuk 1:13), thus is "**dead** through your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1, 5).

**The sinner has committed spiritual suicide.** Our Creator is absolute in His holiness; He is also absolute in His justice (Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 45:21; John 17:25; Revelation 16:5; et al.). Every disobedience calls for a "just recompense of reward" (Hebrews 2:2). The principle is found in Genesis 9:6: "Who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." By choosing to commit sin against God, each of us committed suicide spiritually. Therefore, the principle is "The wages of sin is death," which is separation from God in this life and—if one does not appropriate the benefits of the blood of the Lamb of

God (John 1:29; Ephesians 1:7)—eternal separation from God in everlasting destruction, death, in hell (Romans 6:23)—life for life (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

**The apostle Paul contrasts the characteristics and conditions of the sinner to the characteristics and conditions of the Christian** (Romans 6). All of us are bondservants, or slaves, to the one [either Satan or Christ] to whom we yield ourselves as servants, “whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (6:16). He admonishes, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law [the law of Moses], but under grace [the law of Christ]” (6:12-14). The question, then, is “Who is my master, who is your master?” If one is dead through trespasses and sins, Satan is his master; if one is alive unto God, then Christ is his Master. The next question is, “According to which master I choose to serve, what shall be the wages received?” Holy Writ is clear: “For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23).

### **Crucifying The Old Man**

**The Holy Word tells us how to change ownership.** “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4); and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (6:17-18). The Christians in Rome had crucified the old man of sin; they had put their sinful self to

death in obedience to the Gospel, the “form of teaching.” Paul stated,

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, **that our old man was crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof; neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace (6:3-14).

**How unbecoming it would have been for the Roman Christians to continue in sin**, having crucified the old man of sin! It seems they thought—the more sin, the more grace! The apostle dealt with this repulsive notion in the beginning

of the chapter: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who have died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” (6:1-2).

### **Keeping The Old Man Buried**

Once we have crucified the old man [having repented of sins, been buried in the watery grave of baptism (where we contacted the cleansing power of the blood of Christ in His death, where it was shed [John 19:34]—thus having buried the old man of sin), and been raised as a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)], **“How do we keep the old man buried?”**

**In the first place, we need to keep in mind that life is temporary; there is no guarantee of tomorrow** (James 4:13-15). The ratio is the same as always—one death for one life. “Today is the day of salvation” (Hebrews 3:13-15); “tomorrow may be too late.” We think we are going to be alive tomorrow. In 1959, I was graduated from Alabama Christian High School with ten other students, one of whom was a beautiful Christian lady, Nora Allen [whose family and she worshipped at West End in Montgomery where Dad was preaching]. It was very exciting for each of us. However, unknown to Nora and to us, she had a brain tumor; sadly, within two months my father preached her funeral in Talladega, Alabama. It has been correctly observed that “Life is uncertain, and death is sure.” I must remember that if I would keep the old man buried.

**In the second place, we need to appreciate and ever to be mindful that we Christians have been washed and made white in the precious blood of the Lamb of God** (Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 7:14). Would a bride adorned in her beautiful, pristine pure and white wedding dress wish to walk through and explore a coal mine on the way to her wedding? Is it becoming for the Christian to soil his or her

white garments while on the journey to celestial mansions to dwell in the presence of the bridegroom, Christ our Lord? Whenever I am tempted to sin, to transgress the law of Christ, and thus again to become a slave of Satan, it will help if I remember that Christ gave His life to purify and to save my soul, through His marvelous grace. His mercy does not give me what I deserve; His grace gives me what I do not deserve. I love Him for that!

**In the third place, we need to be keenly aware that we can depart from the paths of righteousness and be eternally lost.** Paul warned brethren, "...for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:12-13). It can happen to me; it can happen to you! "Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). One can "fall away from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Note the strong warning of the apostle Peter that one who has "escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" can become again "entangled therein and overcome." The latter end is worse than never to have known the way of righteousness (2 Peter 2:20-22). Judas was at one time a faithful apostle; he cast out demons as did the other apostles [Satan cannot cast himself out]; however, Judas allowed Satan again to gain control of his heart and life. He betrayed his Master and went out and hung himself; this child of God "fell away" and went to "his own place" (Acts 1:25). Paul buffeted his own body, lest he himself become a "castaway," "rejected." If I am going to keep the old man buried, I must remember that I could fall away from the Truth, become an apostate, be separated from God by sin, and be eternally lost.

**In the fourth place, we need to have the courage to**

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**“stand up for Jesus” and His righteousness in our lives and against our archenemy, Satan, and his wicked influence.**

Paul commended the Corinthians thus: “...for in faith ye stand fast” (2 Corinthians 1:24; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58). He had exhorted them in his earlier recorded epistle, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong” (16:13). We as Christians have adequate armor to stand against Satan and his darts of temptation and to be strong (Ephesians 6:10-14), but it requires courage. We are to become spiritually mature in Christ and thus are to develop the courage to say “no” to the ways of the world. It takes courage to go against peer pressure; it takes courage to be different; it takes courage to refuse to yield to temptation; it takes courage to let our lights shine in the world of darkness; it takes courage to defend the Lord when others are ridiculing Him! If I am going to triumph over evil, I must be courageous.

**In the fifth place, we need to realize that strength and conviction come through a study of God’s Word.**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith (Romans 1:16-17).

We are saved by faith [“whosoever believeth in Christ” (John 3:16); that is, *pisteuo*, believeth, whosoever has “joyful trust in Christ...conjoined with obedience,” Thayer]. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), not by some “better felt than told experience,” as wrongly averred by the Calvinists.

The child of God meditates upon the Word (Psalm 1:1-3); “Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin

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against thee” (119:11; cf. Acts 20:32). The strength received from the Bible enables us to resist the Devil. What did our Lord do when He was tempted by Satan? Did He not quote scriptures (Matthew 4:4, 6, 10)? What if each of us were to quote scriptures when tempted to utter falsehoods, to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, to drink alcohol, to use and/or listen to profane speech or gossip, to be a talebearer, to have ungodly attitudes and seek to sow discord and defile the precious bride of Christ, to forsake the assemblies with the saints, et al.? Oh how we need to feed on the meat of God’s Word rather than continuing to partake of milk, like babies (Hebrews 5:12-14). We get concerned when our children cannot move from milk to solid food; should we not get concerned when some of us are not advancing to the meat of the Scriptures? “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV). When the old man seeks to come out of the grave, my having crucified him, I must demonstrate the strength that I have received from the Word!

**In the sixth place, we need to flee from Satan and from his temptations.** He ever seeks those whom he may devour, “whom withstand steadfast in your faith” (1 Peter 5:8-9); “...resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). We need to know his tactics, his subtle nature, his craftiness, his dressing up as an innocent lamb, his working through false prophets, et al. (Genesis 3:1; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 John 4:1). Never underestimate your enemy! And, always be able to identify him.

Never be deceived into thinking that you can associate with those who are engaged in the devil’s evil works and not be tainted. How often does it happen that one is walking in the vicinity of evil activity and looking, then that one is standing

somewhat in admiration of the evil activity and its participants, and finally that person is sitting and is personally engaged in the evil (Psalm 1:1-3)! Wise we are if we listen to Paul's inspired warning: "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals. Awake to soberness righteously, and sin not" (1 Corinthians 15:33). I need to keep in mind that sin is progressive in its nature; I need to avoid it like the plague if I am going to heaven.

**In the seventh place, we need to be present at every service of the Lord's church which it is possible for us to attend** (Hebrews 10:25). Each of us needs the edification of the brethren; you need my pat on the back, and I need yours. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). We need the edification of the song service, the strengthening of the Lord's Supper [His memorial] and of the preaching and study of the Scriptures, the encouragement of coming with our brethren into the very throne room of the Father in prayer through our Mediator, and the becoming less selfish and more grateful through our cheerful giving for the Cause of our dear Lord.

**In the eighth place, we need to follow great examples.** Christ is our perfect example (1 Peter 2:21). The apostle Paul is our example, as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). He commended the Thessalonians for following Paul's example and for being powerful examples themselves "to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-10). It is easier to be faithful when others whom we love and admire are faithful: "...and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear" (Philippians 1:14). Choose right, God-fearing, dedicated, steadfast examples to follow; many immoral, ungodly,

ruthless, dishonest, unethical, unfaithful examples exist in this world today. Choose carefully, for there is as much power in examples for evil as there is for good—if not chosen wisely. What folly it would be to follow someone into destruction (Matthew 7:13-14)! If I am going to keep the old man buried, I need to follow the examples of those humble, good elders, preachers, Bible school teachers, and other Christians who are on the way to heaven.

**In the ninth place, we need to think of the reward of doing good, not only in this life but also in eternity.** Satan promises a happy, fulfilled life in his kingdom. However, he promises what he cannot deliver. Sin carries a terrible ultimate price, in this life and in the hereafter. The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin; indeed it has a beautiful appearance. To many people, drinking alcohol or using drugs or engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage or devoting one's life wholly to the pursuit of riches or spending their lives in denial of God and in rebellion to His law appears very attractive. However, that is the way of destruction. Ask the rich farmer, who lived his life in pursuit of “things”; he lost his eternal soul. “Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Called a “foolish one” by God (12:20), he should have told himself that not “things” but his eternal soul was his greatest possession. How powerful is the example of Moses, who chose “rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). We can choose to sin today, but payday comes tomorrow:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap

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corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:7-9).

Living righteously brings great joy and the peace that passeth understanding in this life and also indescribable happiness in eternity. What a motivation it is to think of the crown of life that awaits the faithful (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8)! I need to remember that joy unimaginable awaits those who overcome the world and keep the old man buried.

### **Conclusion**

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them (Revelation 14:13).

Dear reader, have you washed your robes (22:14)? Have you kept them spotless in the blood of the Lamb (1 John 1:7)? If you need to become a Christian [by hearing the Word (Romans 10:17), by believing in Christ (Hebrews 11:6), by repenting of your sins (Acts 2:38), by confessing Christ as the Son of God (8:37), and by being baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins (22:16)], please obey while you have time and opportunity.

Dear child of God, if you have not kept the old man buried, will you today come back into the fold of safety by repentance, confession, and prayer, as did the prodigal son (Luke 15)? The Father is awaiting your return with open arms of love and compassion, and He wants to rejoice with you.