

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Dealing with Temptation Wisely

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 10:13 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:1-8; 5:28 | John 10:30 | James 1:13 | Hebrews 13:5

SUMMARY

Temptation has been part of human existence ever since Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden.

Even Jesus was tempted when He walked this earth, but He was the only one who successfully resisted every time. Although none of us can achieve His perfect record, God has not left us to fend off the devil's attacks on our own. To aid us in standing firm against fierce temptations, He's given us a powerful verse of scripture in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." If we want to respond wisely to temptation, this verse must become part of our armor of protection.

SERMON POINTS

Temptation can be briefly defined as an enticement of our natural, God-given desires to go beyond God-given bounds.

For example, loving someone is good, but lusting is an act of selfishness that exceeds the limits the Lord has established for us. Temptation is basically an enticement to disobey God, to rebel against Him and have it our way.

The source of temptation

One of our natural tendencies is to blame others when we yield to temptation. In fact, some people even try to blame God, but He is never the source of temptation. James 1:13 says, "He Himself does not tempt anyone."

Satan is the ultimate tempter. He even uses other people to lead us astray. However, we can never claim that Satan or anyone else made us sin because we are the ones who chose to yield to the temptation.

The nature of temptation

- **It's common to everyone.** Although we don't all have the same areas of vulnerability, no one is above temptation.
- **It's built upon fantasy and visualization.** It begins as a thought and progresses when we imagine ourselves participating in something outside God's will.
- **It's different from trials.** The devil tempts us to do what is evil and walk away from the Lord. Trials are periods of testing that God uses to strengthen us.

False ideas about temptation

We know that any area of captivity can carry additional consequences.

- **Temptation is not a sin.** Jesus' experience clearly demonstrates this. He was tempted yet never sinned (Matt. 4:1-8). We don't always have control over thoughts that enter our minds, but we do have a choice to hold onto the thought or to let it pass.
- **We don't fall into temptation.** The enemy doesn't push us into his trap, nor do we accidentally fall into it. Although we may be prompted by the devil or influenced by others, the decision to step out of God's will is our own.
- **The Lord isn't displeased when we're tempted.** He knows temptations will come, and He wants us to see them as alarms that warn us to watch where we're going.
- **We can't always run from it.** Sometimes fleeing from temptation is the best option, but sometimes

running away is impossible. We must build our defenses, so we won't yield to the tempter.

The process of temptation

To guard against temptation, we must understand how it works, such as through:

- **Thought.** It begins with a tempting thought that enters our minds.
- **Imagination.** We begin to imagine what the fulfillment of that desire would be like. Although we don't physically act upon it at this point, we're living it out mentally.
- **Meditation.** Once we've discovered pleasure in the thought, we think about it more often.
- **Will.** As we consider whether to continue with these thoughts or act upon them, our wills become involved.
- **Choice.** Eventually, we'll have to make a choice to progress farther down this path or retreat.
- **Consent.** At this point, we permit ourselves to yield.
- **Sin.** We act upon it.

The power of sexual temptation

Sexual enticement is so powerful because it's a deceptive offer of immediate pleasure without penalty. If we don't resist at the very beginning, it will develop into a major problem. The tempting thought begins as a spark, but soon grows into a flame, and eventually erupts into an inferno. Once we've yielded to the desire, we are weakened for the next temptation.

Protecting vulnerable areas

An important aspect of resisting temptation is recognizing and guarding our weak spots. First, we need to make absolute decisions regarding what we will not tolerate in our lives. Then we should rely on God's promise to put limits on our temptations (1 Cor. 10:13). And finally, we must seriously consider the consequences of yielding.

Protecting vulnerable areas

There are steps you can take to deal with temptations wisely:

- **Take responsibility.** You are responsible for what you do with temptations.
- **Focus on the big picture.** A temptation offers a small picture of the pleasures and profits of sin, but God wants you to see big consequences.
- **Identify areas of weakness in your life.** Recognize which aspects of your life are easy targets for Satan's attacks.
- **HALT.** Never let yourself get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.
- **Visualize yourself doing the right thing.** Instead of fantasizing about the pleasures of sin, imagine yourself pleasing God.
- **Make yourself accountable to a friend.** Find someone you trust and then contact that person when you are feeling tempted.
- **Read the Word of God.** You won't be able to defend yourself against the enemy's attacks if you don't know the Scriptures.
- **Make prayer a vital part of your life.** Having fellowship and conversation with the Lord each morning strengthens and alerts you to Satan's attacks during the day.

RESPONSE

- What is the most powerful temptation you are facing today? How are you dealing with it?
- Which areas in your life are easy targets for the enemy? What will you do to defend yourself against his attacks in these vulnerable spots?
- Considering your most frequent temptations, what can you do beforehand to strengthen your resolve to resist?

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