

Faith Works to Resist Temptation

(James 1:12-16; 4:1-10)

Understanding what's at Stake: The Crown of Life or Certain Death?

In James 1:12, James declares, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." The blessed man who endures temptation stands in stark contrast to the cursed man who succumbs to it, for that man is separated from God in spiritual death! Lust leads to sin which produces death just as certainly as the conception of a child leads to the child's birth and eventual death. Giving in to lust conceives sin, which then must live and ultimately die (James 1:14-15). Plainly put, spiritual death results from succumbing to temptation (Romans 6:23; James 1:15; Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

The way you choose to deal with temptation will lead either to a crown of life which will grace your soul for all eternity, or it will lead to eternal death in which you will be separated from the presence of God, in torment and darkness, forever. Please understand: Having the faith to resist temptation is of unparalleled eternal importance.

Faith takes Responsibility for Dealing with Temptation

The first thing anyone must do to deal effectively with temptation and sin is to recognize it and take responsibility for it. People of faith understand that they are responsible for their own temptations and sins. Yes, Satan is the tempter (Matt. 4:3), but his efforts can only be effective if we give in to our own lusts. Blaming anyone but

yourself for sin that you have committed is counterproductive and self-deceiving (James 1:13, 16; Genesis 3:12-13; Exodus 32:21-24). We can blame neither Adam nor our parents! (Romans 5:12; Ezekiel 18:20). The "soul that sins" is alone accountable for itself.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR SINS?

- 1. Who did Adam blame for his sin?*
- 2. Who did Eve blame for her sin?*
- 3. Who did Aaron blame for his sin?*
- 4. Who does the Calvinist blame for his sin?*
- 5. How is blaming others for our temptations and sins counterproductive?*

Temptation has its Roots in Human Desire

"Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires" (James 1:14). Loving the things of this world feeds the desires of the eyes, of the flesh, and of pride (1 John 2:15-17). We want what WE want. Love for the world and the things that are in it will produce lust that will put us at odds with God and our fellowman (James 4:1-4).

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF LUST?

1. Did God create humans to have desires?
2. Did God provide lawful ways for fulfilling desires?
3. What makes a desire dangerous? How do desires become the gateway to sin?

How Faith works to Resist and Overcome Temptation!

- *Faith Knows the Scriptures (Rom. 10:17).* If we trust God to help us, we can overcome temptation. It begins by becoming aware of what HE wants. The Psalmist said, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You” (Psalms 119:11). We learn the will of God from the Scriptures. Jesus’ knowledge of the Scriptures was a powerful tool in resisting Satan’s temptations (Matt. 4:1-11). Jesus is our example of enduring temptations (1 Peter 2:21-22; Heb. 4:15).

DO YOU KNOW THE SCRIPTURES?

What are the book, chapter and verse references in Old Testament that Jesus quoted in Matthew 4 to answer to Satan?

- *Faith does whatever it takes to avoid sin!* The Bible uses extreme language to describe the extent to which disciples are to go to avoid giving in to temptation. Paul says, “I pommel my body” to keep from sinning (1 Cor. 9:27, RSV). Jesus told people that if their own hand, foot, or eye caused them to sin, they should cut it off (Mark 9:43-48)! There is no price too heavy to pay to avoid hell! Jesus died on a cross to gain the victory over sin; anything we would do pales in comparison. “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:3-4).
- *Faith channels and controls desires in appropriate ways.* In order to conquer temptation, we must work to control our desires instead of allowing them to control us (Gen. 4:7; Titus 3:3). When we become Christians, we must change our minds about lust and learn how to channel human desires to accomplish good (Eph. 4:22-32)! And when we are tempted, we must actively look for the way of escape that the Lord provides (1 Cor. 10:13).

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION???

If we are sincerely praying for help in avoiding temptation, what are some specific things we would be doing to avoid the temptations to...

1. View pornography?
2. Commit sexual immorality?
3. Get drunk?

- *Humility and prayer are the keys.* Your pride will tell you that you can handle temptation on your own. You can't!!! James tells us that God "gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6-10). We need God's grace to overcome temptation and sin! Jesus told His disciples to "pray lest you enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46, 40). He taught all of us to pray to the Father, "do not lead us into temptation" (Matt. 6:13). "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Conclusion

When we use God's word to resist temptation, and take the way of escape that God provides, we show the world that we have faith in a Great King who has the power to conquer evil! Like James, let us each resolve to show our faith by our works (James 2:18).