

3 - Temptation and Trial



Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41)

Memorize

Temptation

The word “temptation” receives in the Bible various meanings:

1. The seduction or encouragement to do what is wrong in the eyes of God. (James 1:14, Genesis 6:1, 1 Timothy 6:9, 1Thessalonians 3:5).
2. Persecutions, struggles and trials.

The possibility of sin happens because of freedom: if we had no choice, we would not be free. Only in the struggle against evil the possibility of victory arises. Temptations are a chance to exercise our freedom, overcoming sin.

Who is guilty

Temptation comes from within (James 1:14). Although evil forces try to influence us (James 3:6), the responsibility, that is, the guilt, always remains in the person who gives in to temptation and practices sin.

James explains, that each one is tempted by their own greed. Desiring is not bad in itself, e.g. eating, but when it goes beyond the original sense, it becomes sin (gluttony). That is why we must control our greed, that is, our desires.

┆ But I discipline my body, and bring it into subjection. (1 Cor 9:27a)

Temptations follow a system

1. Stimulation of the senses: seeing (1John 2:16), listening (1Corinthians 15:33), smelling, feeling the taste, touching.
2. Seduction (bait): attracted and seduced by one’s desires (James 1:14).
3. Generation of desire in the soul (thoughts - Mark 7:21-23). Acts are born in thought (James 1:14). So far sin can still be avoided.
4. The birth of sin (James 1:15).
5. The attainment of sin (James 1:15b).

The continual practice of sin results in spiritual death (Romans 6:23).

When we understand this terrible process, we can also protect ourselves from sin.

Note: temptation is not sin. It becomes sin only when we give room to it and practice what it suggests. We have to stop its action from the very beginning.

Power

Born-again believers receive power to avoid sin (1 John 3:6). They are not free from involuntary failures (1 John 2:1), but have been set free to live according to the will of God.

The three sources of temptation

Temptations do not come from God (James 1:13), but from three different sides: 1st) Devil, 2nd) World, and 3rd) Our flesh. These enemies will be broached in the next three lessons.

Trial (read James 1:2,3, | 2-16)

Temptation is seduction to sin. On the other hand, probation has a totally different purpose: God tests the person's faith (Genesis 22:1, Exodus 15:25, 16:4). The testing of the faith is often direct, for example, when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. It can also be indirect, e.g. difficulties and persecutions (James 1:2-3, 1Peter 1:6, 4:12). Trials serve to demonstrate that one's faith is genuine.

| Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my anxieties:
(Psalms 139:23)

God allows trials to strengthen our faith, but never to lead us to sin. God is holy and fights sin. If he took his children to sin, it would be a contradiction of his nature. God allows evil in the world, but in no way he wants us to sin.

Proved by sufferings

It is not biblical to think that the Christian life is free from suffering. If anyone thinks this, he may fall out of faith when trials come. Suffering is a means by which faith is tested, purified, and signed.

The love of God is demonstrated by the willingness to suffer for him and his Kingdom (1 Peter 4:21-13).

God exhorts us, to await trials. Living with Jesus is not a holiday trip, but a battlefield! We are not immune to trial (Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 3:12):

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (Psalms 23:4)

Proofs strengthen us (James 1:2,12)

Trials are inevitable. We have to count on them and prepare ourselves to deal with them (Hebrews 12:11).

God uses probation to manifest the believer's faith and integrity, developing character, such as patience, and often enemies of God are silent.

As fire cleanses gold, so also Jesus' disciples need trials, to grow in faith. After probation, we are grown in perseverance (James 1:3, 1Peter 1:6-7, 2Corinthians 4:17).

Joy in trials

How should we respond to sufferings and trials? With bitterness, self-pity and complaints, or do we thank God for them? We live in the hope that "one day everything will improve", or do we thank God for today, the way it is?!

We do not always understand the meaning of the trial, but we can trust that God has a purpose with it. James goes further and advises us to rejoice:

| My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials; (James 1:2)

The biblical faith enables us to make trials a source of joy when we understand its results:

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

In addition to all these advantages and results of trials, we receive the promise of the “crown of life,” the mark of victory, which God will give to those who have remained in the faith in the midst of sufferings and struggles, e.g. the believers in Smyrna:

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

God permits trial, but only to the extent of our strength. When we are tested more intensely, it means that God sees us as stronger people (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Tasks

- 1) How to differentiate between temptation and sin?
- 2) How can trials be a source of joy?

We recommend the study of this lesson to all Christians, especially those who are in the initial phase of discipleship, in the first year after conversion.

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This lesson was voluntarily translated into tuguese by

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Discipleship **4**

*For we **wrestle not** against
flesh and blood, but against
principalities, against **powers**, against the
rulers of the darkness of
this world, against **spiritual wickedness**
in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)*

The Lord has put in the
heart of the couple Rolf
and Elisabete Dietz a desire
to work with discipleship ever since
the beginning of their ministry.
They've got a vast experience
at this task along the years.

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