

Blog



Temptation

Do you struggle with temptation?

“I can resist everything except temptation,” said Oscar Wilde. Temptation is the desire to think, say or do something bad or unwise. It is a trial where we face the stark choice of doing right or wrong. In the moment of temptation we choose to either follow our conscience or compromise our integrity. As we struggle with whether or not to remain faithful to God, sin crouches at the door waiting to see what we will do.

Temptation is not a topic many of us are keen to discuss. But those who battle temptation are in good company. Perhaps the

person in history most tempted was Jesus. He was tempted in every way, just as we are. (Hebrews 4:15) Yet temptation never got the better of him, and he remained without sin. If Jesus could wrestle temptation and win, maybe there is hope for us.

Paul the apostle addressed the issue of temptation head on and made some hopeful comments.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Defeat is not a forgone conclusion when we are tempted. With the help of the Holy Spirit we are stronger than we realise. It is possible to emerge unscathed from temptation with our conscience clear and our integrity intact. Here are some thoughts that may help us.

Temptation is common

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.”

Temptation is common. Everyone gets tempted. “Humanity is in a constant struggle against temptation.” (Robert Kennedy) All of us get tempted and all of us are vulnerable. The trap we fall into is to believe that we are uniquely weak and if we were just a bit stronger we would be immune to temptation. If only we could realise that everyone else is experiencing the same struggles. If we are being tempted, we are not strange. Temptation is common.

Temptation is confined

“He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.”

Temptation is confined. Regardless of how we feel, there is a limit to how much God will allow us to be tempted. All of us have a temptation threshold, and we won't ever be tempted beyond it. That said, the threshold is often higher than we would like. The lie we often fall for is to assume that temptation is the same as sin. That if we are tempted, the battle is already lost. But temptation is not sin. Giving in to temptation is the sin. Temptation doesn't have to overpower us. It might take a fight, but we have the ability to withstand any tempting situation. Temptation is confined.

Temptation is conquerable

“He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Temptation is conquerable. Every temptation is accompanied by an escape route. The excuse, “I couldn't help it,” is lame. There is always, always, always a fire door, an escape hatch, an emergency exit, a way of escape. Joseph proved it when he ran from Potiphar's wife. Timothy was taught to flee always from temptation. It is the one thing we are expected to run away from. When we are tempted we should look immediately for the escape route. It will be there somewhere. When confronted by temptation we are more than conquerors. Temptation is conquerable.

The advice of the old song writer holds true. “Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin; each victory will help you, some other to win; fight valiantly onward, evil passions subdue; look ever to Jesus, He will carry you through.” (Horatio R. Palmer) The tempter confronted a weak and hungry Jesus in the wilderness. But with the truth of scripture our great high priest overcame. He calls us to do the same. Temptation is common, temptation is confined, temptation is conquerable. Don't cave in to temptation.