
**The means and forms of temptation**

1. Temptations coming through people that oppose God and His Word

Jesus and his disciples came many times face to face with this type of temptation and ill-thought trial:

Matthew 16:1

“Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and **tempting him** asked that he would show them a sign from heaven.”

Matthew 19:3

“The Pharisees also came to him, **tempting him**, and saying to him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?””

Matthew 22:18

“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “**Why do you tempt me, you hypocrites?**”

Matthew 22:35

”Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *him a question*, **tempting him**, and saying,”

Mark 8:11

“And the Pharisees came out, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, **tempting him**.

Mark 10:2
“And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce [his] wife?” tempting him.”

Mark 12:13-15
“And they send to him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch him in his words. When they had come, they said to him, Master, we know that you are true, and care about no one; for you do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, Why do you tempt me? Bring me a denarius, that I may see it.”

Luke 11:15-16
“But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.”

John 8:3-6
“And the scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman caught in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said to him, Master, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what do you say? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.”

Acts 20:19
“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.”

1 Peter 4:12-13
“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

As we see from these passages, a way through which the devil tempts/tries the people of God is through other people and through persecution and affliction for the Word of God. We will examine how to deal with this type of temptation, later in this article. But first let’s see the other forms a temptation may take.

2. Temptations coming through one’s own lusts

The lusts of the flesh is another way through which somebody can be tempted:

James 1:13-14
“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 has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

1 Timothy 6:9
“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”
In this category the source of temptation is a man’s own lusts i.e. desires of the old man that are followed through, as for example the desire to be rich. Notice the definite in the above passages: these passages do not say that when you are drawn away by your own lusts and enticed you will perhaps fall into temptation. No! What they say is that you will, definitely, be tempted. Similarly they do not say that if you desire to be rich you may, perhaps, fall into a snare. No! What they say is that you will, surely, fall into a snare, the same snare that drowns men in destruction and perdition! As Paul also tells us:

**Galatians 5:17**

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

**Romans 8:7**

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”

The temptations of this category is something that we decide to enter, drawn away and enticed by our flesh, the old man. The result? Again let us keep the high volume of the Scripture: sin, destruction, perdition, death. Following through with the desires of the old men is a very serious matter with the most serious consequences. Let us not deceive ourselves, thinking perhaps that because we are saved by grace this means that we are now free to go ahead and follow the desires of the old man and somehow escape the consequences. Galatians 6:7-8 tells us:
“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

What should we do then? The Word is again very clear:

Romans 13:11-14
“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to [fulfill its] lusts.”

Ephesians 4:20-24
“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5
“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”
And Proverbs 4:23

“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”

In all these passages the main acting part is not God but us. It is us that are called to put off the old man and put on the new. It is us that are called to renew our mind and it is us that are called to guard our heart with all diligence. Yes without God’s help there is not much that we can do. But God’s help come to those that are willing to follow Him. Let us not deceive ourselves that somehow we will be fruitful Christians, while at the same time our hearts and minds go behind the lusts of the old man. This is not possible! It is indeed black and white. It is either the one (God) or the other (the world). A mixture will not work!

3. Temptation coming directly from the devil

In Matthew 4:1-11 we find the devil speaking directly to Jesus. But how did he do it? The answer is in the spirit, by “revelation”, so to speak. I would like to devote some time to this category, as, due to the ignorance that exists, we frequently see people attributing to God whatever comes from the spiritual ground. But it is not like this. I used to believe that since I’m a Christian the devil cannot speak to me. But he can – he did it in the case of Jesus. If we decide to ignore this possibility and consider everything that comes from the spiritual ground as coming from God, then we are opening a door to the devil to drive us astray by giving us false information, which we believe, because we think - since it so clearly comes from the spiritual ground – that it comes from God. Empirically I have observed this happening when people grave for something; they grave for something so much that when they pray about it they can hear
only the answer they want. In other words, they are not neutral, wanting to do the will of God, whatever this will may be. In contrast, they just want to get a confirmation for what they so much desire. They are lusting for something, thus opening a door to the devil to give them false “spiritual” information, which when followed will lead them to great troubles. That’s why you have to judge what you receive as spiritual information with the Word. Does what you have supposedly heard from the spiritual ground align with the Word of God both in its content and in the way it flows? If not, you should reject it without question. Sadly many brothers do not check what they have supposedly heard from the spiritual ground to see whether it squares with the Word. For example, I have seen people that say that are Christians committing adultery, divorcing their Christian spouses and marrying others (who also say that are Christians), and, as if all these were not enough, they justify their actions by saying that allegedly God told them to do so! Could God ever tell them to do something like this? NO! How do we know it? Because such a guidance would be entirely opposite to the Word of God! What truly happened, and the Word very clearly and plainly explains it, is that they didn’t watch out and were drawn away by their own lust and enticed, thus opening the door to the devil. If really somebody told them to act like this, it was not God but the devil. The Word of God is therefore the measure against which any information that comes from the spiritual ground should be measured and evaluated. Jesus also did this when he used the Word of God to fight Satan and his temptations. His answers were all starting with “it is written”.

Concerning the superiority of God’s Word against any “revelation”, even if it comes in an extraordinary way, Paul was very clear:

Galatians 1:8
“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

Even if an angel from heaven - and obviously such an angel would be a fallen angel, an angel of darkness, as exactly Satan is – came down and started preaching to them a gospel different than the one Paul, through revelation of Jesus Christ, received and preached to them, this angel would be accursed. Getting information from the spiritual ground is not enough. This information has to also come from the right source of the spiritual ground. Else it is a temptation and an attack of devil. And to know to source of the information, you have to evaluate it against the only valid measure: the measure of the Word of God.

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