

Temptation

Roger Tointon—January 31, 2015

Greetings, everyone! Good afternoon on God's Sabbath Day. I always like to see faces I remember, and sometimes they, too, look a little older than the last time.

JOKE: Older people are kind of tech-challenged. I don't know if you all know about, or have read, in the comics *Pickles*. I kind of like that because it's about old fogies. There's Earl and Opal. One day Earl comes into the room and Opal is on the phone. He comes up and she is listening, and then said, 'Yes, Uh ha, I tried that, it doesn't do it; it doesn't work.' Then Earl says, 'What's going on?' She says, 'Oh, I'm on the phone with tech-support.' He says, 'What's the matter?' She says, 'My laptop'—she's got it open in front of her—is making this horrible beeping noise and it's annoying and I can't stop it. So, I'm on hold while tech-support checks with the supervisor. Oh, he's back. Yes. Yes, we have one of those. Yeah. Really? Is that right? Well, very good, thank you very much. He said that if we would replace the batteries in the smoke alarm the beeping would stop in the computer. Isn't it amazing how they're all inner connected.'

Brethren, what does that have to do with I'm going to talk about today? *Absolutely nothing!* But I do have something I want to go over with you a little bit, and hopefully we can all learn about something that a least some of you are familiar with. That term is *temptation!* Are any of you familiar with temptation?

I know temptation too often too much, and maybe that's why I'm talking about it. I hope as we go through Matt. 6 that we will see some things that maybe you hadn't realized about how God uses the word *temptation*. Generally, every place that I'm going to be talking about temptation in Scripture, it's the same Greek word—different verbiage—for tempt, temptation. They come from the same source.

Matt. 6 is where Christ was showing the disciples how they should pray, and he goes through what people call 'the Lord's prayer,' but it was an outline of how we are to pray.

Matthew 6:9: "Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: 'Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not **into temptation**, but rescue us from the evil one....'" (vs 9-13).

Let's read another Scripture and see if we

have a conflict. Remember, Christ is telling us to pray, "...lead us not **into temptation**..." What does James say?

James 1:2: "Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various **trials**." In the Greek *trials* is the same word as *temptation*. Why then would James says to *count* it all joy, when Christ says to pray *not to be led there*?

We know that God's Word is Truth, and therefore, we know that any apparent discrepancy always means that we need to get to the bottom of it and get the rest of the story. That's what we're going to try to do.

Verse 3: "Knowing that **the testing of your faith produces endurance**." James is talking of a *testing* of us:

- our character
- our will
- all that we may come up against

So, it's talking about what is rendered here as "...various trials." We have trials all the time; way too often it seems to us. Yet, James says to count it all joy. We find that hard to do. But James says that it's a *testing of our faith*. When our faith is tested, what does it do if it works out on the right side? *It will produce endurance!* There are other things, other qualities that it can produce.

Verse 12: "Blessed *is the* man who **endures trials**... [or temptations—same word] ...because, after he has been **proved**..." Now we're getting to the heart of the matter here of what James is talking about. We'll find that Christ was really talking about the other side of this Greek word, because it does have more than one side.

James says when you are *proved*; how do you get *proved*? *By a test!* If you remember in school or college days, when tests came up... Well, it can be trepidatious, no doubt about it. But if you take the test and you get an 'A' what do you then feel? *You feel good, better!* You're uplifted because you met the test and you passed it. Same thing in the trials in our lives.

After we have been *proved* "...he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (v 12). That's what we have to keep our eyes on, because **that is our goal!**

We have been given an incredible calling, a very incredible calling. We have to stay focused, because look at all the distractions we have around us, let alone the trials. There are the distractions that

can just pull us down, and the main problem with distractions is that it takes our focus off of God, through His Word and contact with God, too. It can cause us to pull away from praying as we should, and as often as we should. Distractions are not a good thing.

Temptation does have two sides:

1. *putting to a test*

That's on the good side, because God uses that to build character within us, whom He has begotten to become His very sons. That's an astounding calling!

In a bad sense it literally is:

2. *temptation to do evil*

What did Christ say in Matt. 6? *Pray to not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one!* The evil one is the one who brings that kind of temptation into our lives, but not only Satan, because we're tempted in two different ways. We are tempted by Satan the devil.

1-Peter 5:8: "Be sober! Be vigilant! For your adversary *the devil* is prowling about as a roaring lion... [When a lion is going about like that, what is he wanting to do?]: ...seeking anyone he may devour." Satan is the roaring lion and he wants to devour you and me. He wants to do that very badly.

That is temptation to cause us to sin against God, to pull away from God, to lose our focus on what God has shown us in His Word that we are to focus on. And therefore, to commit sin, the breaking of God's Law, which leads to death (Paul says in Romans). It does unless repented of.

James brings out another aspect; it's very interesting that the Greek word for temptation is brought out three times, and one comes from a different Greek word.

James 1:13: "Do not let anyone who is **tempted** say, 'I am being **tempted** by God,' because God is not **tempted**... [a different Greek word, which literally means *it's impossible for God to be tempted to do evil*] ...by evil, and He Himself **tempts** no one *with evil*." God is not doing the wrong tempting. He does put us through the test. Keep in mind that when we talk about temptation, there's more than one side to it. Let's see where it leads us.

1-Peter 4:12: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the **fiery trial** among you *which is* taking place to **test** you..." Again, Peter confirms it. Why? They are taking place *to test us*, to test our temper as it were.

They talk about the testing the temper of steel and so on to see if it is sturdy enough to do the job it was designed for. That's what God is doing

with us! He's called us and given us an earnest of His Spirit, but He wants to make sure that we can endure and stand the test. That's what He wants to know each and every day. That's why we have so many *trials*.

"...to test you, as if some strange thing *were* happening to you.... [no, it's not strange] ...But to the degree that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly" (vs 12-13). That's at the resurrection when we will be changed from this mortal body, and we will become like Christ. That we cannot fully comprehend, and yet, we can believe it because God has opened our mind to believe it.

Verse 14: "If you are reviled for *the* name of Christ, *you are* blessed... [it's *blessed* to be *tempted* in that way] ...because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you; on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. Assuredly, let none of you suffer as a murderer..." (vs 14-15).

He goes on to show that we should not be reviled because of our sins. If we're reviled, let it be because people think we are strange or against them, because we want to stand for God *first*, the Truth of God *first*, and whatever man says *second*. We encounter that situation many times.

It must be by God if it's going to be right and it's going to be true. Sometimes that can get us in trouble. I think, as we grow closer to the end, we're going to find out how much that can get us in trouble very much. Didn't that get our brethren in the first century in very serious trouble? *Cost them their lives many times over because they stood for the Truth, and they were willing to die for it!* I hope that we, too—if that situation comes up—but we don't know—do we?

Verse 16: "Yet, if anyone *is suffering as a Christian*... [that's how we're to suffer] ...he should not be ashamed; but let him glorify God because of this... [Why?] ...for the time *has come* for judgment to begin with the household of God..." (vs 16-17). That's you and me and our brethren wherever around this world. We are one because God has made us one. Our time is now to go and take that test. It may be the final test for us individually, or for all of us one day in the not too distant future. We don't know the time, and yet, if it is a final test, we want to make sure that we pass that test.

1-Peter 1:6: "In this you yourselves greatly rejoice; though for the present, if it is necessary..."

- Isn't it necessary?
- Would we still be on course if God hadn't tested us?

- If He hadn't put things in front of us that made us have to make some very hard decisions?

That was for a purpose, and that's why God allowed it. Even it was from Satan in the form of temptation, or if it was *because of our own lusts*—and that's another way we're tempted to evil—Satan does that every time. When he is tempting us it is always to get us to do wrong. What is another way?

“...you are in distress for a little while by various trials; in order that the proving of your faith, which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is being tested by fire... [sometimes it does seem like fire] ...may be found unto praise and honor and glory **at the revelation of Jesus Christ**” (vs 6-7)—the resurrection. Definitely we have to go through that. Let's see what Paul has to add to this.

1-Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind...” Why do we feel, sometimes, like the lone wolf? Why is God picking on me? *We have no reason to do that!* People all around us suffer temptation and trial.

It is “...common to mankind, for God, Who *is* faithful, **will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear**; but with the temptation, He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*” (v 13).

- Is that not a promise by God?
- Is that not reason for us to have absolutely no fear or doubt of the outcome?

Unless we ourselves don't want to try anymore. It's up to us, brethren. God is there for us. He will not give up on what He has started. Scripture backs that up! If we don't make it, we can put all the blame on ourselves. We need to keep that in mind as we go through all these things that we have to in this present life.

But when we are tempted, when we are tried, what comes up at that point? *Every time it's a time for choice!* We've come up against this thing—whatever it may be—and we've got to decide this way or that way; there's a *right* way and *wrong* way. So, it's choice time, but the decision is ours. God makes sure that we're the ones who have to choose. He's got a lot to say about that. It is a matter of choice, and a time of choice.

Hebrews 4:15—talking about Christ: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *One Who* was tempted in all things according to *the likeness of our own temptations...*” Was Christ a human being? Some do not believe that, I realize, but what does this say? If

He was “...tempted in all things according to *the likeness...*” of what we have to go through, was He not a human being? Is that not why He can empathize with the trials that we are going through? *Absolutely!*

“...yet, *He was* without sin” (v 15). We cannot say that, but He can say that because He did not sin. That's why He is our Savior.

Hebrews 2:14: “Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil.” That's why Christ could not sin. He had to absolutely overpower Satan and have him behind Him, so that He could be our Savior.

Remember what Jesus went through with Satan after He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights. How do you think we would feel? *Well, we would probably be dead, in our condition today!* But Christ did it, and it was *then* that Satan came and tempted Him.

- When does Satan come to us?
- Doesn't he come to us at our weakest moment?

I know that he does! Many times you may have said that all of a sudden it comes, you're blindsided by this temptation. You don't know where it came from. I think I know where it came from; it came from Satan the devil, planting something in your mind and putting something right in front of you. You didn't have to be there at that time and place, but you were and BINGO! there is a serious temptation to you, whatever it may be.

“...in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; and *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death” (vs 14-15). That is mankind; that's what mankind has been going through. What do they fear the most? *Death!* They just don't know or they're afraid they don't know. Some of them do believe in life hereafter in more or less the right sense, certainly not perfectly because their mind is not opened. But they fear death because it is unknown what will happen.

Verse 16: “For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham.” We are the “...seed of Abraham,” whether we're Israelite or Gentile, because God has opened our mind and begotten us as His sons. We become the *spiritual seed of Abraham*.

Verse 17: “For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For **because**

He Himself has suffered, having been tempted in like manner, He is able to help those who are being tempted (vs 17-18). That's you and me, our brethren wherever they are. Brethren, we really need to keep in mind, no matter how hard it gets in our daily routine of things, ***God is there! Christ is there!*** He has been there! Look what He went through on the cross, let alone other times when He was here upon the earth.

Let's look at Matt. 4 a little bit, and this will begin to show us what Christ went through, which I think too often—I know too often, maybe not all the time—we take for granted what Christ did, what He went through as a human being. We've just read that He did that so that He could completely empathize what we're going through. We really don't think of it that way, but that's what we read and that's what's true.

You know the account, Christ was in the wilderness and, Matthew 4:1: "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit **in order to be tempted by the devil.**" This had to be. This was something He had to go through. He knew that! When He was out there those 40 days and nights with nothing to eat or drink, don't you think that this was on His mind? Not only survival, but He knew that He was going to have to face Satan, and He was going to have to overcome him. As Jesus got weaker—and He did get weaker; He was famished—and at the end of His rope. He was out there "...**in order to be tempted.**..."

"...afterwards He was famished. And when the **tempter** came to Him..." (vs 2-3). Stop and think: Here you are, the Son of the Almighty God, Who created everything, including the one coming to tempt You. What does Satan say?

"...he said, '**If** You are the Son of God...' How would you like that? Here you are, you know who you are, and here is your worst enemy, and he is putting you down like a slap in the face. "...**If** You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'" (v 3).

Verse 5: "Then the devil took Him to the Holy city and set Him upon the edge of the temple, and said to Him, '**If** You are the Son of God...' (vs 5-6). Again, he does the same thing. But what did Christ do, each time? He had a choice to make. He was a human being; He went through His temptations—the Scriptures show—and had the same choices to make as you or I would had to make if we would have been there. ***But He made the right choice!*** Does that not set the example for us?

Mark 14—this was the night before Jesus' trial and death and they were out in the Garden of Gethsemane after taking the Passover: Mark 14:33: "And He took Peter and James and John with Him;

and He began to be deeply troubled and heavy-hearted." Did He not know what He was going to have to go through? ***Yes, He did!*** He was the Son of God! He relinquished what He was, what He had, to become this little human being. But very early on He had understanding of what He was going to have to do. So, He knew that the hour had come.

Verse 34: "And He said to them, 'My soul is filled with anguish...'" Does that sound like someone who is not a human being? ***No!*** He was speaking as a human being. He was filled with anguish because He knew that it was not going to be pretty.

"...even to death... [showing the depth of His feeling] ...remain here and watch.' Then He went forward a little, dropped to the ground and prayed, that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him" (vs 34-35). Was this not *temptation*? Here He is, He knows what He's supposed to do. He knows why He is there. But He does not, as a human being, want to go through it physically. Can you blame Him? ***No! You can't blame Him!***

Verse 36: "And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things *are* possible with You.... [it's possible with You to]: ...Remove this cup from Me!.... [but ***He made His choice*** right then and there] ...Yet, not what I will, but what You *will.*'"

When we are in our deepest temptation and trial, aren't we to say the same thing? ***Absolutely!*** I mean, if Christ—our Savior, our elder Brother; that is our promise if we're faithful—can make the right choice and go the right way, shouldn't we?

So, every day, as you go through trials—I can promise you, you will go through more trials, and some you will not like at all. I know that I will go through trials. I don't look forward to it in most ways. Sometimes I can look at it a little more the way I should, but, brethren, every time trials come up, let's keep in mind that ***we have a choice and we must not make the wrong choice!*** We must not let Satan get the best of us and pull us over here to the wrong side and against God. ***From now on, anytime you're faced with temptation, trial, remember you have a choice!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 6:9-13
- 2) James 1:2-3, 12
- 3) 1 Peter 5:8
- 4) James 1:13
- 5) 1 Peter 4:12-17
- 6) 1 Peter 1:6-7
- 7) 1 Corinthians 10:13
- 8) Hebrews 4:15
- 9) Hebrews 2:15-18
- 10) Matthew 4:1-3, 5-6

11) Mark 14:33-36

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