

What Temptation Can't Do

1 Corinthians 10:13

Many times when we hear the word temptation we hear about it in the context of Christianity, but actually temptation is a universal experience. All people experience it. Whether it's the temptation to eat something unhealthy, or spend money we don't have, we're all familiar with the saying, "I know I shouldn't...but I really want too..."

We all experience this, although sometimes in the church we think that temptation only happens in situations where a large amount of sin can be committed, but in fact we can be tempted in smaller ways as well with things like gossip, pride, or selfishness.

What's interesting to me is that if temptation is a universal experience, especially for those in the church. Then why don't we talk about it more? In fact, sometimes even in church the word temptation seems like a taboo; where people are afraid of confessing that they're struggling with temptation because they're afraid of judgment and the perception of weakness.

Here's the thing, we have to understand that "struggling with temptation" is different than "giving in to temptation." In the dictionary the word struggle means *"to make forceful or violent efforts to get free of restraint or constriction."* So, if you're struggling this morning, then that's a good thing!

We're all going to struggle against temptation until the day we see Jesus and He removes it from us. This shouldn't discourage you because Jesus said *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33b) This includes the temptations we face because He overcame the temptations He faced.

With that being said, we don't have to fear temptation. Yes, we should be on guard against it, but must also remember that temptation is limited. Without understanding this, we will always live in fear of what temptation "could do" and forget what temptation "can't do."

Today my hope is that God will encourage you in your struggle against temptation as we look at three things temptation can't do.

- It can't overtake you
- It can't overwhelm you
- It can't defeat you

(Read verse)

This brings us to our first point...

Temptation can't overtake you

Have you ever had one of those experiences where as soon as you open your eyes in the morning your mind gets hit with temptation? You haven't even brushed your teeth and you're already struggling with stuff!

I don't know about you, but this makes me so mad! I feel like the moment I wake up temptation is already trying to influence my day. When this happens to me I have to remember that just because you follow Jesus doesn't mean that temptation just stops coming for you. In fact, it gets stronger and more persistent.

One of the reasons why believers face so much temptation is because even though we've given our lives to Jesus we still have to battle against our sin nature. This sin nature is something that all mankind has been born with ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God. This sin nature produces a desire for us to be self-focused and leave God out of our lives.

The good news is that when someone comes to Christ, they're made new and given a new nature! *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* In fact, Baptism is a perfect picture of this! It's a physical representation of the spiritual death to our sin nature and entering into the new life we now have in Jesus.

- As great as this is, it doesn't mean that we don't have to struggle against our desires for sin. *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.* This is why we experience temptation, because we have a new nature in Christ, but the sin nature in us fights for control.

- This is why many believers get frustrated with temptation, because life can feel more like a battle than something you should be enjoying.

If temptation makes life feel like a battle, how do we approach it? *Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.* The phrase “put on Christ” means to figuratively clothe yourself with Jesus Christ (His conduct, character, and spirit) on a daily basis. This helps us win the battle over temptation because when we “put on” Christ we’re intentionally focusing on what honors God instead of giving into the temptation for sin.

What’s interesting to me is that even though we hear things like this from God’s word, there are still some believers who live in fear of the next time they’ll be tempted. It’s a fear that if they experience temptation that they will be helpless to overcome it. The truth is that when Paul says that “*no temptation has overtaken you,*” he is literally saying that no temptation is a match for you, no matter how great it is!

This reminds me of the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. This story is one of my favorite bible stories, but I want to point your attention to what happened before Goliath met David on the battlefield. *1 Samuel 17:8-11 Then he (Goliath) stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, “Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.” 10 And the Philistine said, “I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.” 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

- If were honest, when it comes to temptation, sometimes we act more like the troopers in Saul’s army than someone that God has gifted and equipped to overcome it.

I’m not saying this trying to condemn anyone because I get it; we can become fearful of temptation because we feel like we tried and failed so many times that it’s just easier to give into the lie that “you’ll never have victory.” Understand that this isn’t how God has called us to respond to temptation!

- God has called us to respond to temptation like David, when he met Goliath on the battlefield. *1 Samuel 17:45-46b 45 Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you.*
 - This is how were supposed to respond to temptation! In confidence that because of Gods strength temptation is no match for us. We have to remember that as believers there is no such thing as being powerless to resist temptation, because of Christ in us we have all we need to walk in victory.

Paul then says something that’s comforting....He says that our temptations are “common to man,” meaning that what we’re being tempted with isn’t unique to us, but it is something many others have experienced.

- For me this is so encouraging because sometimes you can feel like you’re the only one wrestling with something, but that’s not true! *Ecclesiastes 1:9 ... there is nothing new under the sun.* Meaning that what we struggle with others have struggled with it too, and in many cases found victory in it!

Some of the most encouraging moments I’ve ever had in my life are the ones where I swallowed my pride and opened up to another brother in Christ about my own personal temptations. And what amazes me is that instead of being met with judgment, I’m met with and understanding, encouragement, and wisdom on how to overcome what I’m facing.

- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said:** *Temptation flourishes in the dark, but it withers and dies when it is brought into the light of accountability.* Sometimes we don’t experience victory in our temptations because were not willing to talk to someone who’s “been there before.” When we do, not only do we break the stronghold of secret sin, but we begin the path to healing and a deeper walk with God

What temptation can’t do is overtake you, because God has given you a new nature, strength to overcome, and community to find healing in. Knowing this helps us understand why.....

Temptation can’t overwhelm you (ref second line of verse)

Paul is telling us that when we’re experiencing temptation that God is being faithful to us by not allowing us to be tempted beyond what we are able to handle. This speaks of God’s sovereignty and control in our lives even while experiencing temptation. **You might be thinking, “If God is in control, why does He allow me to be tempted?”**

- When we think about God allowing us to experience temptation, our human minds can't help but think that God is, in some way, not taking care of us, but this couldn't be farther from the truth. In fact, God even allowed Jesus to be tempted in Matthew 4; so if God allowed Jesus to experience temptations, what makes us think we will be exempt from them?

The truth is, even though we typically think about temptation as a bad thing, it's not all bad. Temptation can actually have a purpose in our lives. It's not just something that can lead to sin, but it's also something that can lead to spiritual maturity and make us more like Christ.

- *James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials (temptations - kjv),³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Just to clarify, even though temptation can be purposeful, that doesn't mean that God is the one who tempts us.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. This means that God isn't going to tempt us, because He is in us, so for Him to tempt us would be to tempt himself, and that can't happen. *James 1:14* reminds us of where our temptations for sin come from, *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*

So back to our question, "why does God allow us to be tempted?" Ultimately, it's so that we can learn what's right and wrong, what pleases Him and what doesn't. We learn this through the falls and victories of the temptations we face. In other words, temptation is like a teaching moment. It's an opportunity to recognize how the enemy works, recognize areas of our life that need growth, and by God's grace learn to walk in obedience to His word. *Hebrews 5:14b those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

- Even if we fall to the temptation, God gives us the grace to learn from that experience so we can keep moving forward. *Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,*
 - What's amazing about not being tempted beyond what you are able is that it lets us see what God is doing when we experience temptation. He is faithfully watching over the temptation and guarding us from anything that would be too much for us to handle.
 - Now, this doesn't mean that you won't experience difficulty in life, but it means that as you rely on the Lord, God will even watch over the temptations we face, so we don't encounter something we aren't ready for.

What temptation can't do is overwhelm you because God is in control. He gives us that ability to spiritually mature through the temptations we face and guards us against any temptation we aren't ready for.

Temptation can't Defeat you (Reference third line)

What Paul is describing here is how we can practically find victory over temptation without eventually giving into sin. It's by taking the way of escape. One thing that I have to make clear is that the way of escape doesn't mean that you will be free from the temptation or that you won't be tempted again. Notice Paul writes, "with the temptation," not absent of it.

- It's critical that we understand this because if you're waiting for the day that you're not tempted anymore you are just going to be frustrated and as a result believe the lie that the only way to find relief is to give into temptation.

One commentator said: "the way of escape is like a mountain pass with the idea of an army being surrounded by the enemy and then suddenly seeing an escape route to safety." So how do we access this escape so we don't give into temptation?

- You may not like the answer....I know I didn't. It's not by suddenly being free of the temptation, but it's by holding onto the promises of God while enduring the temptation.

How does that give us an escape? **For example:** The temptations we experience are like storms and like any storm they come and they go. They don't last forever. Meaning that every temptation you face has a time limit. It won't last forever.

- Think about that.....If you think back to the last time you experienced temptation, and tried to resist it, that was probably one of the first thoughts that came into your mind, "how long am I going to experience this?"

When we remind ourselves that temptations come and go it helps us to keep moving forward, but in order to make it through the storms of temptation you need something to keep you grounded. Something that's to un-cloud your mind from the heaviness of temptation and that's the promise of God's word. **Promises like - *Philippians 4:19 And my God shall***

supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Or Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

- Holding on to God's promises means believing it as truth, and not ignoring it when you're in the midst of temptation. *Psalms 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you.*
 - Practically speaking, holding onto and believing Gods promises should cause you to take action when you're experiencing temptation. In *1 Corinthians 6:18* Paul says - *To Flee from sexual immorality.*
 - If all you do is quote scripture, but you haven't removed yourself from the situation, called a friend, or spent time with the Lord, you'll eventually ignore what the word says and give into temptation anyway.

Once you're out of the situation and holding onto Gods promises, the most important part is finding your satisfaction in the Lord. Because the areas of temptation that we repeatedly fall into are evidence of a deeper issue, that we're trying to find satisfaction in something other than Jesus.

- As human beings, God has created us to be satisfied in Him alone. He's the only one that can do that. *John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*
 - We find satisfaction in Christ as we intentionally spend time with Him and walk in obedience to His word. Overtime, things that used to satisfy us no longer do because we are satisfied in Him.

What temptation can't do is defeat you, because the storms of temptation are no match for the promises of God, and they lead us to the way of escape and satisfaction in Him.