

Temptation, those things which invite us to sin, surround us. We first learn about temptation in Genesis 2-3. Although Adam and Eve were not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve saw that the fruit was “good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom” (*Genesis 3:6 NIV*). She took it, ate it and offered it to Adam who also ate it. Realizing what they had done, they hid themselves from God. When questioned by God, they tried to shift the blame. It is easy to push the blame for temptation. But to do that would be denying the truth. James tells us a number of things about temptation that should correct such wrong thinking.

1. ***Do not blame God for temptation.***

- a. *Though trials are tools in the hand of God, He never intends to break us through them but to strengthen us and prove our faith as genuine.*

People regularly try to blame their circumstances for sin. But circumstances come from the hand of God. Blaming our circumstance is like blaming God. But imperfect, sinful influences around us are not the ultimate cause for a sinful response to temptation.

- b. *God’s character makes it impossible for Him to be the source of temptation.*

There is no sin in our absolutely holy God. He has no inclination to do anything contrary to His perfect, holy nature. He cannot be tempted to sin and would not tempt another to sin. Therefore, the circumstances around us are not the ultimate temptation or the reason for our sin.

2. ***The ultimate source of temptation is found within each person.***

- a. *The desires in our own hearts entice us.*

Temptation grows out of my desire for something, explaining why some things tempt one person but not another.

- b. *Within our hearts desire conceives and gives birth to sin.*

Our hearts are full of various desires. The desires themselves may not be sinful. If we let wrong desires control us, then it will result in sin. If we let the thought of a wrong action join with the desire, it leads to sin.

Sin brings death. Physical death is separation of spirit and body. Spiritual death is the separation of a person from God. Our sin deserves the punishment of death. But we can thank God that He has provided in Jesus a solution for sin and death.

3. ***Our natural tendency is to deceive ourselves about these truths.***

- a. *We would tend to deceive ourselves about ourselves.*

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that our hearts are deceitful. We don’t want to recognize that we are guilty. Sin within us will try to deceive us (*cf. Hebrews 3:12-13*). If we find ourselves blaming others for our sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

- b. *We would tend to deceive ourselves about God.*

If we blame anyone or anything but ourselves, we are also deceiving ourselves about God and His purposes for us. James calls upon us to think on God’s goodness (James 1:17-18). God gives us exactly what we need, when we need it. He gives it to accomplish His good purposes in us.

God, who gave light to the earth, is greater than these gifts. Unlike the sun and moon, God remains constant. The new creation is even more important than the physical creation. God has given us the new birth. God offers this gift through His word. Some day in the future God will renew all of creation and make it once again good. In the meantime the child of God becomes a sign of what will come in the future, which was the function of the first-fruit.

4. ***God provides all that we need to successfully resist temptation.***

We are reminded elsewhere in the Bible that temptation will come. But God provides all that we need to successfully resist temptation. He limits how much we can be tempted. He provides a way to bear through temptation. He gives us His Spirit.

- a. *God gives His Spirit to all His children whose fruit includes self-control.*

Every person who comes to God through Jesus becomes a child of God and receives God’s Spirit. When we submit to the Spirit, He produces in us many good qualities or “fruit” (*Galatians 5:22-23*) including self-control.

- b. *God faithfully limits temptation to a bearable level and provides a way to endure it without sinning.*

God promises this in 1 Corinthians 10:13. We all share the same kind of temptations. But God knows how much we can bear and He limits all temptations. But God also expects that we respond properly and take advantage of the ways He gives to resist temptation. For example, we should put God’s Word in our hearts (*Psalm 119:11; John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26*). We can also encourage one another not to sin and help each other resist temptation.

Temptation comes to all of us. But we should not blame others when we sin. The ultimate problem is not external, but within our own hearts. Remember that God is greater than all our struggles. In His strength we can resist. He gives His children all that they need to resist temptation. Turn to God for the help which we all need. He is good and gracious.