

Jesus Delivers Us from Temptation

Peter assures us, "*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations...*" (2 Peter 2:9). As strong as some temptations may feel to us, God has put a safety net in place to rescue us. Any time we find ourselves overwhelmed by a temptation to sin, we have access to the throne room of God to ask for help. And our appeal is answered by our High Priest who has been tempted in every way just like us but successfully overcame the desire to sin (Hebrews 4:15-16). He shares His triumphant strength with us so we can be victorious over our weaknesses.

And if that is not enough, God gives us this amazing promise: that He will faithfully keep the temptation from becoming so strong that we cannot stand against it (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will always show us the way out!

Testing our Faith

Two of the most dreaded words my teachers ever spoke when I was in high school was "Pop Quiz!" Not many people feel comfortable being tested, even when they think they might know the material. Peter told the church, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try (test) you, as though some strange thing happened to you*" (1 Peter 4:12). God is promising His church that there will be spiritual "pop quizzes" and we shouldn't think it is strange to find ourselves being tested. I think too often we focus on the failure side of being tested, when God wants us to see how we are becoming successful believers. He wants us to focus on what we have in our hearts.

More Precious Than Gold

God tests us, not simply to point out what we do not know, but to show us what we have learned and how well we are doing! He does want to refine our faith so that we can stand with honor before our Savior some day (1 Peter 1:7). That means God must bring greater and greater challenges into our daily lives designed to take us to new levels in our Christianity.



In our opening verses, James encourages us to rejoice when we find our faith (what we believe about God and our salvation) being tested (James 1:2-4). The results of that testing is learning to have a persevering faith that does not give up. As we persevere in faith, we find God will build upon our beginning beliefs "precept upon precept" (Isaiah 28:10) moving us to greater levels of understanding until we are "*perfect (whole, complete) and entire, lacking nothing.*"

Clearly, much more could said about trials and temptations but two things are good to remember:

1. God wants us to be successful in overcoming our temptations.
2. When our faith is put to the test it is so we can move to a greater level of completeness in Christ.

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"Trials and Temptations"

How Christianity Works Series

By Pastor Curt Carter

Trials/Temptations

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (various trials), knowing this, that the trying (testing) of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting (lacking) nothing."

James 1:2-4 King James Version

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake and tsunami shook the island nation of Japan. Many lives were lost, villages destroyed, and radiation threatened from a badly damaged nuclear reactor on the coastline. As news agencies from around the world reported on the scene of devastation, they observed the largely kind and calm way the Japanese people reacted to their dire circumstances. It was mentioned several times in the various news reports that the Japanese symbol for "crisis" was also the same for "opportunity", as a way to



account for the Japanese adjustment to tragedy. In Japan, the culture difference between a crisis and an opportunity was in the viewpoint and attitude of the participant in the event.

When you begin a study of the Biblical words for "trials" and "temptations", you will also find that they are influenced by the context and the viewpoint of the reader.

The words for "tempt", "to try", "attempt", "to test", "try", "prove", "temptation" and some words for "trial" or "trials", all come from the same basic root word in the New Testament Greek language. Often we may see the words "trials" and "temptations" used almost interchangeably in scripture although today they might have a much different meaning. Many newer translations of the Bible attempt to identify these words in a way that they will make sense to today's reader. In this pamphlet, I also hope to shed some light on the common Christian experience of trials and temptations.

God Does Not Tempt Us to Sin

The Book of James makes it very clear that no one should blame God for being tempted to sin (James 1:13-15). God is not placing temptations in our paths just so He can cry, "Gotcha!" when we inevitably fail. It is comforting for us to know that God is not busy setting up traps of temptation for us to fall into! I think that this is clear for several reasons. First of all, as James mentions, it is not in the character of God to tempt man with evil. God's nature is pure and undefiled from evil and His love demands that He saves us *from* sin and not lead us *into* sin. This means that His actions on behalf of mankind have been to help us overcome temptation (more about that later). I also believe that God treats us justly and lovingly as His children. Since He knows our every thought in advance (Psalm 139:2) and nothing about us is hidden from Him, how hard would it be for Him to custom design a temptation to take us down every time? But our God is not petty and takes no pleasure in our misfortune.

Watch Out for the Tempter

Jesus carefully instructed His disciples to pray, "And lead us *not* into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." (Matthew 6:13a). In the Greek, that second phrase should read "deliver us from the evil one," clearly a reference to Satan. As much as God wants to spare us from falling into temptation, Satan is cunningly trying to ensnare us.



After all, Jesus had personally experienced an attack of the tempter in a Judean wilderness as He was being prepared for His leadership role as the Messiah. At the end of forty days of fasting and solitude, Satan arrives to systematically undermine Jesus' confidence in His call to ministry (Matthew 4:1-11).

It is true that Satan sometimes tries to tempt believers into drunkenness, jealousies, and sexual sin, but I suspect his real sense of accomplishment comes from getting us to fall into unbelief; injuring our trust relationship with God. As we carefully observe his attack on Jesus in the wilderness, we see him trying to get Jesus to act independently of God in violation of God's Word to Him. It had worked in the Garden of Eden when Satan had deceived Eve into believing untruths about God (2 Corinthians 11:3; Genesis 3:4-6). We must continually "watch and pray" to avoid falling to temptation because although our spirits are willing, our flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41). Satan is an able adversary, but the love of God makes us more than conquerors in Christ (Romans 8:37-39).