

WHERE DO TEMPTATIONS START?

*“For we do not have a High Priest
who cannot sympathize with our
weaknesses, but was in all points
tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*

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Heb 4:15

Temptations to sin are ever present around us. However, how does temptation take root in our hearts?

As James 1:14-15 points out, “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

Here’s how Jesus clearly stated this in Mark 7:20-23: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come; sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

He highlighted further in Mat 5:28, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

As Paul said in Eph 6:12: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Obviously, temptations will come, but we have the choice to resist and reject them, as otherwise we sin against God. Do we therefore choose to reject temptations, or do we entertain them and allow sin to rule our hearts?

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As we know from scripture, entertaining temptations in our hearts is already sinning against God, the reason we must resist the enemy.

What is the nature of temptations we must reject?

Gal 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Then, how can we resist temptations?

Col 3:5-6: "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience."

If we don't, what are the consequences of sin?

Rom 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What must we do if we sin?

Pro 28:13: "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Will we choose to reject sin and live for Christ, or become slave to sin?

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Resisting the devil requires a determination to follow Christ in all aspects of our life.

How is that accomplished?

1Peter 5:8-9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.”

1John 2:15-16: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.”

Eph 6:11-12: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Heb 12:1-2: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith.”

Gal 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

Are we in?

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Resisting the enemy, who consistently tries to tempt us into sin, requires steadfast determination and commitment to follow Christ, and using the power of the Word of God available to us.

Here's what scripture says to that effect:

Mat 26:41: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

Rom 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

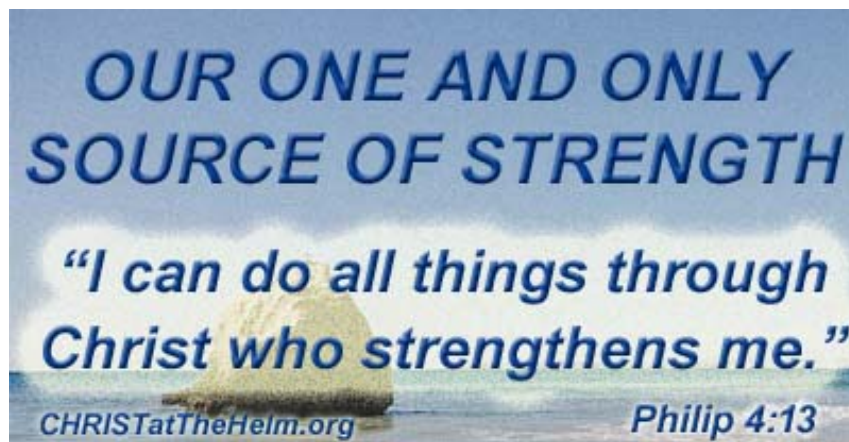
Gal 5:16-17: "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want."

Philip 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things."

2Tim 2:22: "Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Is God's Word powerfully seeded and daily watered in our hearts so we live to worship God?

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In all truth, without the power of God through Christ, we are helpless in trying to reject the temptations of the world.

Where then do we find the strength needed?

Mat 11:28-30: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

Mat 4:4: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

John 14:15-16: "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever."

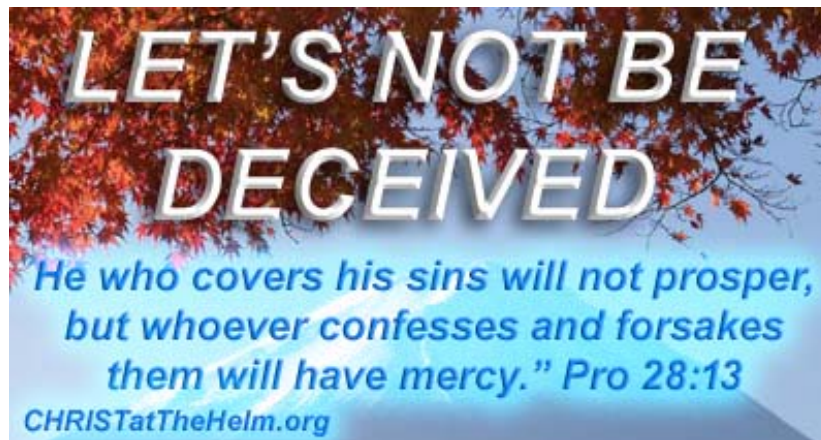
1John 4:4: "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

In other words the power is found in the knowledge of God through His Word, so we can be strengthened by the Holy Spirit who indwells all true believers.

The reason Gal 2:20 says: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Are we living our life by faith, in the power of Christ?

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Temptations always start in the heart, the reason we are warned to not be deceived by the world.

Here are warnings the Word of God gives us:

1John 4:1: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

1Cor 15:33: "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

1Cor 6:9-10: "Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

1John 1:8-10: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

What's more? Heb 10:26: "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left."

The reason Paul enjoined us to be steadfast in our faith in Heb 10:23: "Let's hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."

Will we surrender our hearts and follow Christ from His Word?

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