**More Like the Master**

In His Temptation

Lesson 7

*“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit*

*into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matthew 4:1)*

**Tempted and Tried**

The Devil, from the beginning of time, has been known as *“the tempter”* (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). Starting with Eve (Genesis 3:4-6), the Devil has caused many from the beginning of time to fall into sin through various temptations. Temptation is as old as the human race and it has not overlooked a single person of accountability since Adam and Eve.

The Devil uses the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride (vainglory) of life to tempt humanity into sin (1 John 2:16). He used these three avenues of temptation with Eve, with Jesus, and he continues to use the same today. The lust of the flesh is a temptation to think, “It is my body and if it feels good to me, I will go ahead and do it.” The lust of the eye is a temptation to think, “I desire whatever I see and will take it for my own.” The pride of life is a temptation to think, “I am in control of my own life and I do as I please and not as God or anyone else tells me to do.” The Devil can also use other circumstances in life, such as persecution, to cause people to be tempted (tested) and thereby sin. The Devil can even use good, God-given emotions and desires for wrong purposes. Fortunately, we have the example of Jesus to help us overcome the temptations of the Devil.

The Greek word for temptation (*peirazo*) is also used in some contexts to mean “testing”. The basic meaning, therefore, of *periazo* is “to test, to prove, or to try”. For example, Ananias and Sapphira “tested” (tempted) the Spirit of God (Acts 5:9). The Christians in Jerusalem were told not to “test” (tempt) God (Acts 15:10). Paul recorded how the Israelites “tested” (tempted) God in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:9; Hebrews 3:8-9). The basic idea of temptation, then, involves a testing of the mind and of the will.

But, not all testing is bad. For example, Jesus wanted the faith of his disciples to be tested or proved in the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:6). Another example of good testing comes from the pen of Paul who called upon the Corinthian Christians to “examine” (Gr. *peirazo*) or test themselves to see if they were in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). We also know that God tested or “tried” Abraham in the matter of offering up Isaac (Hebrews 11:17; see Genesis 22:1 where we are told that God “proved” Abraham on this occasion). Finally, the Christians at Ephesus tested or “tried” certain ones who claimed to be apostles and found them to be false (Revelation 2:2). Testing at times can be a good thing.

However, temptation (testing) which comes from the Devil and the evil world around us is what causes us to want things we do not need or things we should not have. It is not a test in a good way, but a test to get us to sin. As James writes, we are “drawn away” by our own lust and enticed to think, say, and do things that are sinful (James 1:14-15). It is this kind of temptation (testing) that we want to study in this lesson. We will examine how Jesus overcame this type of testing and use his example as our own.

**Jesus and His Temptations**

Jesus was tempted by the Devil. The Devil came to Jesus soon after his baptism and tempted, tested, and tried him (Gr. *peirazo*). The Devil tempted Jesus to sin (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). However, when Jesus was tempted by the Devil he did not sin. The author of Hebrews writes about Jesus as *“one that has been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (4:15). Jesus rejected the Devil’s temptations and said “No!” Jesus appealed to fasting, to scripture, and to prayer as he resisted all of the Devil’s temptations. Jesus’ answer to the Devil’s temptations each time was, “It is written…” (he quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, followed by Deuteronomy 6:16, and then Deuteronomy 6:13). Jesus would not give into the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The temptations of the Devil were unsuccessful with Jesus. When Jesus refused the Devil on this occasion, the Devil left. But, the Devil also looked *“for a season”* (an opportune time) to return (Luke 4:13). The Devil is always looking for an opportunity to return and tempt someone.

Jesus was tempted by men. Jesus was not only tempted by the Devil, but by evil men as well. Various unbelievers tempted, tested, and tried Jesus (Gr. *peirazo*). They did this by their comments and questions that they made concerning him. For example, the Pharisees and Sadducees tested Jesus when they asked him for a sign (Matthew 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16). The Pharisees did this again when they asked Jesus about a man who puts away his wife for every cause (Matthew 19:3; Mark 10:2). The scribes and Pharisees tested Jesus when they brought to him a woman caught in adultery (John 8:6). The disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians tested Jesus when they asked him about paying tribute to Caesar (Matthew 22:18; Mark 12:15; Luke 20:23). A lawyer of the Pharisees did this when he asked Jesus about which was the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:35). There were different tests and trials (temptations) that Jesus experienced throughout his ministry. He described his disciples at the end of his ministry as *“they that have continued with me in my temptations”* (Luke 22:28). When Jesus was tempted by unbelievers he did not fall prey to their tests and traps. He would not be tricked into saying and doing something that was wrong. He stayed focused on the truth of God’s word and he often responded to his tempters with a stern rebuke. Like the Devil’s temptations, the temptations of Jesus’ enemies were unsuccessful.

**The Christian and Temptation**

Christians will be tempted by the Devil. Today, the Devil still uses the same temptations (tests or trials) that he used with Eve, with Jesus, and with countless others throughout time. The Devil can use marital problems and a lack of self-control to tempt a spouse (1 Corinthians 7:5). He can use the infirmities of the flesh as in the case of Paul (Galatians 4:13-14). He can use pride or self-righteousness to tempt those who are spiritually minded (Galatians 6:1). He can use riches (1 Timothy 6:9). He can use the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life to tempt people to sin (James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:15).

Christians will be tempted by men. Christians will also be tempted (tested) by the world around them. One kind of temptation (trial) given by men comes in the form of persecution. Evil men can raise up persecution against Christians today just like in the case of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:4-5), the brethren at Smyrna (Revelation 2:10), or the brethren at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:10). Paul, for example, spoke of *“trials (temptations, KJV) which befell me by the plots of the Jews”* (Acts 20:19). Christians can be tempted (tested) through suffering just as Jesus suffered while being tempted (Hebrews 2:18). Christians can suffer just like the faithful men and women of Old Testament times (Hebrews 11:37). Peter described the suffering of some New Testament Christians as *“manifold trials”* (1 Peter 1:6) and *“fiery trials”* (1 Peter 4:12).

What are Christians to do in the face of temptation? We sing, “Yield Not to Temptation”! Like Jesus, Christians can appeal to scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). Each time a Christian faces temptation with, “It is written…”, he is giving the only right answer. These three words (“It is written…”) are some of the strongest words that anyone can use against the Devil. We can lay up God’s word in our heart that we might not sin against God (Psalm 119:11). We can say, “No!” when we are enticed to sin (Proverbs 1:10). We can put on the whole armor of God and stand against the wiles of the Devil (Ephesians 6:10-17). We can have a strong faith to withstand the Devil (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Christians can pray like Jesus taught: *“lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4). They can stay watchful and spiritually alert (watch and pray) so they will not fall into temptation (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40,46; Ephesians 6:18). Having been tempted himself, Jesus knows how to aid us when we are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). We sing, “I Need Thee Every Hour.” Through prayer, we can receive mercy and grace to help us in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16). The time of temptation is certainly a time of need and we can get help from God through prayer.

Christians can also look for a way of escape and run. We are given the promise that if we resist the Devil, he will flee from us (Matthew 4:10-11; James 4:7). Do not flirt with temptation. Be like Jesus and tell the Devil to leave: *“away with you”* (Matthew 4:10)! After we say “No!” to the Devil, we can run away from temptation. We have a way of escape. We have this promise from the Apostle Paul: “*There has no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it”* (1 Corinthians 10:13). Like Joseph who ran from Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39:12), we can *“flee youthful lusts”* (2 Timothy 2:22). Running, in this case, is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

Does God tempt us today? Absolutely not. James writes: *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, brings forth death”* (James 1:13-15). Being tempted does not make you a sinner, but giving into temptation does. We are tempted when we allow ourselves to be drawn away by our own lusts (desires). It is a choice we make. The Devil or man places a temptation in front of us and we go after it. We are like the hearts of men described as the rocky soil, who *“in time of temptation fall away”* (Luke 8:13). When we choose to give into temptation and sin, we choose to follow the example of Eve and not the example of Jesus. When we give into temptation, we choose to give a place to the Devil in our heart instead of refusing him (Ephesians 4:27).

**More Like the Master in His Temptation**

Can we follow the example of Jesus and overcome temptation like he did? Absolutely! We are not ignorant of the Devil’s devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Seeing how the Devil worked with Eve and with Jesus, we know what avenues of temptations he will use against us. We will not be beguiled like Eve was deceived (Genesis 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14). We can take God’s way of escape! Remember, *“the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation…”* (2 Peter 2:9). We can be strong and overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14). We can have a strong faith that is victorious and overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). John gives us this promise: *“greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). Like Jesus, we can resist the temptation to sin.

Temptations (tests, trials) will come. When we go through them and remain faithful to God we are blessed and rewarded. They make us stronger and we will be rewarded for enduring them. James wrote: *“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith works patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing”* (1:2-4). Again, James wrote: *“Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him” (1:12).*

**Questions**

1. Who is “the tempter” and how does he work? What three avenues of temptation does the Devil often use with mankind?

2. What is the basic definition of temptation?

3. What are some Bible examples of good testing and bad testing?

4. What were the three temptations the Devil used with Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 and how did Jesus respond to each one?

5. What were some temptations (tests) that Jesus faced from his unbelieving enemies and how did he respond to them?

6. What can the Devil use to tempt Christians today?

7. How can Christians be tempted by other people today?

8. What can Christians do to resist the temptations of the Devil and others?

9. Why does a person give into temptation according to James 1:14-15?

10. What are some promises that God has given his children regarding their ability to overcome temptation?