

# TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS

Sylvester Onyemalechi

To tempt is to try to make a person do something wrong; excite desire in i.e. to cause strong desire in or for something.

Temptation is a common word used by all. Who tempts who? Can God be tempted? Does God tempt men? Who is the tempter? And how can one overcome temptation? These among other questions are what we will be considering in this article.

## GOD DOES NOT TEMPT ANYONE

God tries and tests his beloved, but does not tempt them.

*Gen 22:1-2*

*22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."*

*NIV*

God tested Abraham's loyalty and love but did not tempt him. To tempt is to entice someone to do what is wrong. God tested him to measure his love and loyalty. Read the whole chapter and you will learn a great deal about love and loyalty.

*James 1:13-15*

*13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

*NIV*

God does not tempt people. Each man is tempted as evil thoughts build strong evil desires in the man, creating an open door for the devil. The devil will always find something in the man to use. And that thing is desire. Desire gives birth to sin, and sin gives birth to spiritual death. And thoughts give birth to desire.

Man tempts or rather puts God to the test simply to see if he will keep his promises.

*Isa 7:12*

*12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."*

*NIV*

*Matt 4:7*

*7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: `Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

*NIV*

It is wrong to put the Lord to the test. Men, who do, are in danger of God's judgment. Life always becomes more complicated for them as they come under God's curse. It is wrong to attempt to put the Lord to test. Walk in total submission to Almighty God. Don't question him.

The endeavor of the evil one or evil men is to cause a man to commit sin. It is nearly always in this sense that the word temptation is used.

### **TEMPTATION MUST SURELY COME**

*Luke 17:1-2*

*17:1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come."  
NIV*

*2 Tim 3:12-13*

*12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,  
NIV*

Temptation is part of life. For everyone who has made up his mind to live for the pleasure of God, the devil must harass and tempt such a one. Godliness without temptation will be too boring. School without an examination is no school. Temptation is test for the believer. Temptation and trial are the two sides of a coin. The devil means to harm the tempted, while God allows and uses that temptation as an instrument to test and try the sincerity and strength of the faith, love and loyalty of the tempted. So, it must surely come.

### **THE PURPOSE OF TEMPTATION**

*James 1:2-4*

*2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.  
NIV*

*1 Peter 4:12-14*

*12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.  
NIV*

*1 Peter 1:3-9*

*3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation*

*that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*  
NIV

From the above passages, I can say, that the purposes of temptations and trials are:

1. To test the genuineness of faith and prove his beloved.
2. To produce steadfastness.
3. To perfect us, so that we lack nothing.

Temptation therefore, is an opportunity for us to prove our love and faith in Christ. Therefore, we must count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations and trials.

### **THE TEMPTER AND HIS METHOD**

1. The first thing you know is that the devil (Satan) and his demons are behind every temptation. Satan is the tempter (Matt. 4:1-3,10)
2. Satan does not give up. When defeated, he will continue to attack, applying new methods and tricks and attacking new areas thinking that he will succeed. Therefore, you must continually be watchful, resisting the devil in faith firmly, and he will flee from you.

*1 Peter 5:8*

*8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

NIV

3. Satan tempts through the mind of man by bringing evil thoughts, that is why the Bible says we should guard our minds (hearts) (Proverbs 4:23).
4. The devil tempts man through his desires and passions (lusts and cravings). Our thoughts create our desires (James 1:14:15).
5. Satan is subtle. He can get you going down a track of disobedience, which is an invitation to temptation, not punishing you so as not to give a warning. His strategy often is to get you involved a little at a time, not going too fast, subtly seducing you to sin.
6. The devil uses people, even Christians to tempt people. You can be an instrument in the hand of the devil without knowing it if you yield to him.

*Luke 17:1-2*

*1 Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. 2 It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.*

NIV

Read also Matthew 18:6-7 and Romans 14:19-21.

The way you talk and the things you say, do and the way you eat, dress and conduct yourself can be a temptation to another. Therefore, be careful how you live your life, and always pray that your life will be that of Christ.

7. Unequal yoking and lack of separation opens the door for temptations. It is like one playing with fire. (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Judges 13-16.

Keep the right company. Play the right music. Read clean books and magazines. Watch and listen to the right program on TV and Radio. Entertain the right information. You have to decide to be called a fool or anything they like for the sake of following Christ. Do not for the reason that you want to "belong" or "accepted" entangle yourself and lose your salvation.

Seek God's acceptance rather than man's acceptance. If men approve you and God reject you, you are most to be pitied. That God accepts you is what is important and not man's acceptance. You do not need to belong to the world. You belong to God's family and kingdom. That's enough.

### **HOW SINFUL ACTION COMES**

Sin begins as a thought. When the mind is given to it in meditation and contemplation, it takes over and creates a desire that when fully grown makes the man sin. As man's imagination gets involved, decision is made for it, and the devil has the person just like that. The thoughts, imagination, emotions and will are faculties within the soul of man. The mind of man is the playground of the devil. It is always his target. If he can get you think along with him, he will get you to do it. We all act as we think. We speak as we think. We behave as we think. We feel as we think. The mind of man is the battle ground. All battles are won or lost in the mind of man. If you loose to the devil by accepting his thoughts and letting him convince you, definitely, you will do as he wants you to. But if you win by refusing and rejecting his thoughts and suggestions, you have resisted him and you will not fall into that sin planned for you.

### **THREE AREAS THROUGH WHICH THE DEVIL TEMPTS MAN**

*Luke 4:1-13*

*4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone.'" 5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: `Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" 9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw*

yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 12 Jesus answered, "It says: `Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

NIV

Gen 3:1-7

3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, `You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, `You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

NIV

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

NIV

From these passages we identify these three areas of temptation:

1. The lust of the eyes (Temptation through what we see).
2. The lust of the flesh (Temptation through our desires, passions and weaknesses).
3. The pride of life (Temptation to make you proud and arrogant).

### **LESSONS FROM JESUS EXAMPLE**

1. The one whom you obey, his slave you become (Romans 6:15-18). Therefore never you give in to temptation or you will be making yourself a slave of the devil and that particular sin.
2. Do not look for short-cuts to what you want. Every short-cut will definitely cut your life and celebration short.
3. Master the word of God, for the devil also knows the word of God and uses it to deceive and lure someone into sin.
4. Do not tempt God thinking that he will deliver you (Deut. 6:16; 1 Cor. 10:9).

5. Always stand by the word of God and use it to fight the devil's thoughts and temptations. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

### **POWER TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION**

1. Jesus suffered and overcame every temptation he faced so that when we suffer temptation and trials we will likewise overcome.

*Heb 4:14-16*

*14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

*NIV*

2. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength to endure or bear.

*1 Cor 10:13*

*13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

*NIV*

It therefore means that any temptation that comes to us, God has already provided the strength to overcome it before it came.

3. We are more than conquerors. We are so empowered that we are unconquerable. Romans 8:35-39.

### **HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION**

1. Recognize the tempter and each temptation. Ask yourself these questions when faced with a temptation:
  - a. Is this temptation a violation of the scriptures?
  - b. What have been the consequences in the lives of those who yielded to this sin?
  - c. If I yield to this sin, how will it affect me?
  - d. Am I willing to pay the prize of disobedience – the consequences of yielding to this temptation?
  - e. Will yielding to this temptation satisfy me or only stir up stronger desires?
  - f. Is yielding to this temptation a wise decision or a foolish one?
  - g. How can I do this great evil and sin against God?
2. Be confident you will overcome the temptation.
3. Be determined to overcome the temptation.

4. Use the word of God which is the sword of the Spirit against all temptations and the tempter. Therefore, you must have a good knowledge of the word of God to know the relevant passages to use in each occasion.
5. Rebuke Satan's suggestions each time he tempts you.
6. Do not stop at the suggestions or thoughts; rebuke the demon behind it also. If the thoughts come a hundred times, rebuke it a hundred times. As the devil does not want to give up, you must not give up in resisting him. Resist him and he will flee from you (James 4 7)
7. Always say No to all his suggestions and thoughts.
8. Always pray that you do not fall into temptations. It will make you sensitive to when the devil is tempting you, and help you to overcome it.

*Matt 26:41*

*41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

*NIV*

*Read also Mk. 14:38; Lk. 22:40, 46.*

9. Take note of the areas of your life where you give in easily to temptation, and go to God's word, find out what God says about it. Memorize them and apply them to your life and use them when the tempter comes to tempt you again.
10. Pray also about that area of weakness that the Spirit of God may quicken you and strengthen you.
11. Flee from all that is sin. Joseph ran away from Potiphar's wife saving himself in the process from sinning against God and his boss (Gen. 39). Read also 1 Cor. 6:18; 1Cor. 10:14; 1Tim. 6:7-11; 2Tim. 2:22.

### **CONCLUSION**

You are born in Christ a winner and conqueror. You must overcome every temptation that comes your way, because you are well equipped to overcome all temptations.

*1 John 5:4*

*4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

*NIV*

Remove from your life every ungodly desire. Let the word of God have a place in you. Submit yourself totally to God's word and will and you will be able to resist the devil effectively.

God will not accept any excuse from you if you fall. You are responsible for all your decisions and action. Don't let anyone pull you down. Cut off from any association that will lead you to sin. Listen to the right things. Read the right things. Engage in the right discussions; and always watch what you think.

**Think right and you will live right.**