

CHAPTER 11

Overcoming Temptation



What is temptation? Here's a helpful definition: *Temptation is the state of being enticed to do what is displeasing to God (that which is **wrong**) by a promise of pleasure or gain.* There is no better description of how temptation works than that which is found in James 1:14-15:

"But every man is _____, when he is drawn away of his _____, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

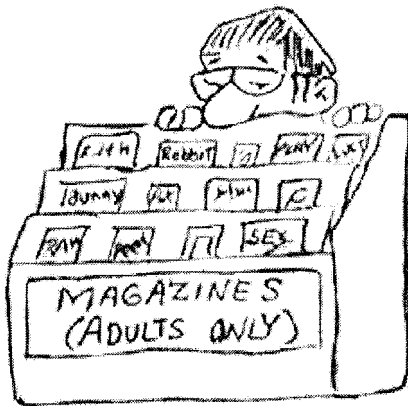
According to this verse, when I am tempted, who is to blame:

- a. Satan is to blame.
- b. God is to blame (see James 1:13).
- c. Adam is to blame.
- d. My environment is to blame--there are too many tempting things to see and hear all around me.
- e. I am to blame; it's my own fault.

We now want to consider three stages of temptation:

STAGE NUMBER 1--THE PERSON IS CURIOUS.

Our own sinful lust wants to trick us by first making us curious about sin. It wants to get us into the "danger zone" where we can easily fall into sin. A person cannot get burned unless he gets near the fire. This first stage of temptation seeks to get the person near to the "fire" and at the same time make him think that the fire won't burn him. Here are two examples of how curiosity can bring us into the danger zone:



LENNY LUSTY



PATTY PLUMP

LENNY LUSTY has a problem with pornographic books and magazines. He knows where the magazine racks are at the store, and sometimes he finds a reason to walk near them so that he can look at what is on the covers. But remember, these covers are meant to entice a person to see what is inside. The message of the cover is this: *If you like what you see on the outside, wait until you see what is on the inside! It gets even better!*

PATTY PLUMP is overweight because she overeats, not because she has any kind of physical problem. Today she is on a diet. On her way home from school she passes the local ice cream store. She hears that the store is offering ten new flavors. She does not intend to eat any ice cream, but she wanders into the store just to find out what new flavors might be there.

LOOK OUT Lenny Lusty! **WATCH OUT** Patty Plump! You will be "carried away" by your own lust! That curiosity will get you into trouble and will bring you into the next stage of temptation:

STAGE NUMBER 2--THE PERSON IS CHARMED.

Lenny suddenly becomes charmed by the magazines--they seem so interesting and so inviting. Patty becomes charmed by the ice cream--it looks so tasty. It is at this stage there seems to be a "big promise" of delight and pleasure. The promise of pleasure is offered as something so wonderful and so satisfying that a person will want to pursue it with all of his efforts.

[Remember, the Bible teaches that there are pleasures connected with sin. See Hebrews 11:25. But these pleasures are very temporary and are not very satisfying.]

Consider the illustration of fishing. The fisherman places on his hook a big, juicy, squirmy worm, and lowers it into the water. The fish sees the temptation, draws near and looks at the worm. It looks so good! It seems so inviting! The fish sees the delectable worm, but not the hook. Or think of a mousetrap. The mouse sees the delicious cheese or peanut butter (the bait) but fails to realize that he is in danger of a quick death.

For an interesting in class exercise, the teacher may want to find certain ads placed in magazines, perhaps ads that advertise alcoholic drinks or cigarettes or other things that are unhealthy. Show how the ad presents only the positive but hides the negative (hides the hook). For example, the ad might show a beautiful woman holding a glass of wine. It would never show a man drunk

and passed out on a park bench, nor would it show a drunk person vomiting. The cigarette ad might show a cowboy on a horse holding a cigarette with beautiful mountain scenery behind him. It would never show the smoker suffering on a hospital bed with a diseased lung (lung cancer).

STAGE NUMBER 3--THE PERSON IS CAPTURED AND CAUGHT.

The fish is hooked, and the promise of pleasure and satisfaction was a lie! You have allowed your lust to carry you too far. **You have been burned by the fire!** The temptation has turned into sin!

[NOTE: *Much of the above material, including the illustrations, was taken from the **Discussion Manual for Student Relationships** by Dawson McAllister and Dan Webster, Moody Press, pp. 165-168].*

David is an example of a man who at one point in his life failed to overcome sexual temptation. As you read 2 Samuel 11:1-5, can you show how David experienced the three stages of temptation as given above?

The Bible does *not* teach that it is wrong to look at a woman. The Bible does say that it is wrong to look at a woman to _____ after her (Matthew 5:28). God doesn't expect a man to walk around blindfolded, but He does expect a man to look at a woman as a **person** and not as an object of lust, as a sex object, or as a mere body.

Joseph's Fine Example on How to Overcome Temptation (Genesis 39)

1. Don't even yield one inch!

Joseph refused to sin against God (Genesis 39:8). He firmly said, "NO!" and he meant it. He would not accept the invitation from this wicked woman. He refused to get close to her. He refused to lie with her. He kept his distance from her. She may have been a very beautiful woman, but Joseph knew that she belonged with her husband and she did not belong to him.

Being tempted to do wrong is not a sin. Sin comes when we yield to temptation. David once was tempted when he saw a beautiful woman (2 Samuel 11:2-4). He yielded to this temptation and decided he would be with this woman, even though he knew that she was married to another man. This was adultery, a terrible sin.

2. Realize that even though sin might be fun, it will not be fun for long.

Be sure to see where sin will bring you in the end. Sin often results in harm to yourself and others. It results in misery, regret, guilt and finally the judgment of God.

Joseph knew that a few moments of sinful pleasure was not worth the trouble that would follow. Spending a little time with a wicked woman would not be worth it. Joseph knew he would get into serious trouble with his master. He would be breaking his master's trust and showing himself to be unfaithful. Joseph's master knew that he could trust Joseph with whatever he put

into his hand. How terrible it would be if Potiphar learned that he could not trust Joseph with his own wife!

Most of all Joseph knew that if he were to do the wrong thing he would get into serious trouble with God. The Lord was his heavenly Master, and Joseph wanted to please Him most of all.

Moses refused to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25). "Season" means "short-lived, lasting for only a short time, temporary." The pleasure of sin is soon over and then there is a letdown followed by guilt. A glutton (a person who eats too much) may enjoy ten pounds of chocolate for a short time, but he will soon suffer a terrible stomach ache! A drunkard may enjoy drinking a lot of beer, but later he may not feel good at all, and may even vomit. A person may enjoy smoking cigarettes, but when he ends up in the hospital with deadly lung cancer, he will realize that all the pleasures of the cigarettes were not worth it. Sin always has consequences and the wise man will consider the consequences beforehand. Joseph considered the consequences and he knew that sin was not worth the terrible results it would bring.

3. Recognize sin for what it really is!

Joseph knew that to do what this wicked woman wanted him to do would be an act of "G_____ W_____" (Genesis 39:9). To yield to this woman's evil suggestion would destroy the good relationship he had with his master. Most of all it would be a terrible **sin against** _____ (Genesis 39:9). Joseph's fear of God was greater than his love for the temporary "pleasures of sin." See Hebrews 11:24–25. Joseph was afraid to do anything that would displease his God. He feared God and believed that God was SO GREAT that to disobey Him was unthinkable!

We need to see sin as God sees it. We need to see how terrible sin is and how dangerous sin is. We need to always remember that sin will never **help** us; it can only **hurt** us. ***It never pays to disobey God.***

Joseph knew that sin was AGAINST GOD and he wanted to avoid anything that would be against God. After David committed adultery, he recognized that his sin was primarily against God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this _____ in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4).

Sin tries to deceive us and trick us, but Joseph refused to be fooled. Joseph kept things clear and simple. He said to this wicked woman, "**Thou art his wife**" (Genesis 39:9). His meaning was this: "You are Potiphar's wife! You belong to him. For me to be with another man's wife would be great wickedness. It would be a terrible sin."

Often we think about sin in the wrong way and we deceive ourselves. We might think in the following ways:

"It's not really that bad. My friends don't think it is wrong at all."

"Everyone else is doing it; why shouldn't I do it?"

"I'll just do it this one time."

"It's all right for me to do this, as long as no one else sees me do it."

Think carefully about the statements given above. What is wrong with thinking in these ways?

4. Don't even get near the temptation!

This wicked woman tempted Joseph continually, but day by day Joseph refused to even be "W_____ H_____ " (Genesis 39:10). He would not even get near or close to her! Joseph knew that if he were to play with fire he would probably get burned (see Proverbs 6:27–28). He kept his distance. He stayed away from this woman.

Sin is very serious. It is not something to joke about. It is something to avoid at all costs. Suppose you are hiking through the woods and suddenly you see a very poisonous snake right on the path in front of you. You would shrink back in horror and you would try to get away from that snake as fast as possible. You certainly would not pick it up and play with it. Sin is like that snake. The Bible says that we must "Abhor that which is _____" (Romans 12:9). "Abhor" means to hate, to shrink back in fear (just as you would shrink back from that deadly snake).

What should a young person do with magazines, books, pictures, television programs or movies which tend to stir up impure thoughts? We need to be very careful what we let our mind dwell upon. What we think about will determine what kind of person we are. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). What kinds of things does God want us to fill our mind with (Philippians 4:8)?

5. If the temptation becomes too strong, FLEE!

This wicked woman did not give up on Joseph, even though he repeatedly refused her advances. One day she actually grabbed him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." Joseph immediately ran (39:12), leaving the garment in her hand! He knew that he would be in great danger if he stayed near her, so he ran.

What does God tell us to do (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:15–20)? F_____. The word "flee" means to run away from something.

Joseph successfully overcame this strong temptation and won the victory! This encourages us and assures us that it is possible to resist temptation, to gain the victory and to be pure and clean. If Joseph did it (by God's grace and with God's help), we can do it also! (See 1 Corinthians 10:13; Psalm 119:9,11).

Supplemental Material Relating to Eve's Temptation (Genesis Chapter 3)

(Especially Helpful For Teens)

(See the following pages)

DELIVERED FROM THE DEVIL'S DECEPTION

In Luke 11:4 we learn that our great God is able to deliver us from evil, AND ALSO FROM **THE EVIL ONE!** In 2 Corinthians 2:11 we are told that we are not to be ignorant of SATAN'S DEVICES.

In this lesson we will look at one of Satan's subtle strategies designed by him to bring us into slavery. May God deliver us from the evil one and his tactics.

Genesis 3:1—"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

In Ezekiel 28 we have a description of an angelic creature named Lucifer before he fell into sin. It says that he was "FULL OF WISDOM AND PERFECT IN BEAUTY."

When the devil fell into sin, he did not lose his wisdom, he merely stopped using it for the glory of God. As perverted as his wisdom is, it is still wisdom! The devil is very smart and we will see this in the way he skillfully deceived Eve.

Gen. 3:1-- Here is Satan's paraphrase of what God said: "Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden." Is this really what God said? The answer is both YES and NO!

There's a sense in which that is what God said! It is true that they were NOT to eat of EVERY tree in the garden. There was one tree they were forbidden to eat from. The devil paraphrased what God had said (he did not quote word for word what God had said). He did not render an exact quotation of Genesis 2:16-17.

Satan's paraphrase is not the way God said it, AND THE DEVIL EMPLOYED A SUBTLE SHIFT OF EMPHASIS which really began to work on Eve's mind.

Let's see what God really said! In Genesis 2:16 a very positive statement is made by God: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." You can't get more generous than that! Think of the liberty Adam had! Think of all the variety of fruit he could enjoy ("of every tree")! He could have apples and oranges and pears and peaches and bananas, and you name it! God gave him all these things richly to enjoy!

In Genesis 2:17 we find that Adam was given one restriction. There was one tree, and only one tree, which he was told not to eat from. He could eat from all the other trees.

Remember, there was only one forbidden tree in the garden. There were multitudes of "non-forbidden trees" given to man to enjoy. There was only one forbidden tree given to man as a test of obedience.

Suppose you walk into one of those ice cream shops which has 30 or more flavors of ice cream. Suppose the owner of the shop wants to reward you for being a faithful customer and he says, "Of all the flavors of ice cream in my shop you may freely eat to your full, all except for the chocolate chip flavor." Wouldn't that be a good deal? Who cares about the one flavor I can't have. There are at least 29 flavors that I can have. I'm going to enjoy the 29 flavors that I can freely eat! I'm sure the owner has some good reason why he does not want me to have the

chocolate, but I'm so thankful for his goodness in what he has allowed me to have! It would be stupid of me to get all upset about the one flavor that I cannot have while not appreciating the 29 flavors that I can have!

God's command given in Genesis 2:16-17 was very positive. The devil took it and made it sound very negative:

God said, "YOU MAY EAT OF EVERY TREE EXCEPT ONE"

The devil said, "YOU MAY NOT EAT OF EVERY TREE"

What was the devil's strategy? HE WANTED EVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE ONE RESTRICTION! He wanted Eve to focus upon the ONE TREE she was not to eat from.

Consider again the ice cream shop. The owner had said, "OF ALL THE FLAVORS IN THE SHOP YOU MAY FREELY EAT, EXCEPT THE CHOCOLATE CHIP ICE CREAM."

That owner in saying this had been very gracious and generous. However a very negative person could come along and say, "Hey, wait a minute, YOU CAN'T EAT OF EVERY FLAVOR. That owner is restricting you. He is not letting you eat every flavor. You are really missing out on something. He will not let you taste THE DELICIOUS CHOCOLATE CHIP ICE CREAM." All of a sudden this kind and generous owner is made to appear as a restrictive killjoy who is seeking to spoil the pleasure of others.

We lose sight of the THOU MAYEST FREELY EAT, and all we pay attention to is the THOU SHALL NOT!

As young people, you have restrictions that have been placed on you by parents who fear the Lord and are concerned for your welfare. Perhaps there are certain activities that you are not allowed to do. But have you ever thought about all the things that you are allowed to do? Perhaps there are certain places that you are not allowed to go. Have you ever stopped to consider all the places where you can go? Perhaps there is something your parents will not let you have. Think of all the things they do allow you to have. The devil's strategy is to get us to focus in on the restrictions and to forget all the freedom that we have. All we think about is the chocolate chip ice cream and how cruel the owner is for not allowing us to have it! HAVE YOU BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE DEVIL'S NEGATIVISM?

Eve was! The answer that Eve gave clearly shows that she had already taken the bait! The devil's negative approach had affected her. In Eve's answer you will see that 1) **SHE MINIMIZED HER GOD-GIVEN FREEDOM** (verse 2); 2) **SHE MAXIMIZED HER GOD-GIVEN RESTRICTION** (verse 3).

Let us consider these two points:

1) SHE MINIMIZED HER GOD-GIVEN FREEDOM

See verse 2-"And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden."

Do you see any words that Eve left out?

"every" "freely"

By omitting these words, she took the very positive statement of God and made it less positive.

2) SHE MAXIMIZED HER GOD-GIVEN RESTRICTION

See Verse 3-"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

She took God's one restriction and made it EVEN MORE RESTRICTIVE! What words did she add?

"neither shall ye touch it"

Satan's negativism had its effect on Eve and she (perhaps unknowingly) took away from her freedom and added to her restriction!

Do you ever get very negative as you think about God and the Christian life? Do you ever say things like this:

AS A CHRISTIAN I CAN NEVER HAVE ANY FUN! Is that really true?

"GO TO CHURCH, READ THE BIBLE, PRAY--THESE ARE THE ONLY THINGS CHRISTIANS CAN DO." Is that really so? Is that really all we are allowed to do?

See Gen. 3:4-5, "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Satan's strategy was to make Eve focus on what she might be been missing: "Eve, you're missing out on something! God is keeping something from you! Eve, God has something very good which He does not want you to have. God is keeping you from what is really good! God wants to deprive you!"

So Eve followed the advice of her "good friend" the serpent. And what benefits did Eve receive? What were the good things that she gained? All Eve received was SIN, SHAME, GUILT, FEAR, SORROW AND A CURSE!

Be not deceived! Don't be ignorant of his devices! The real killjoy is not God, but the devil himself. The devil is the one who wants to bring sin and misery and sorrow to every member of the human race. He wants to keep you from knowing the joy of obedience!

Does the devil use this same strategy today?

Paul wanted only the highest and best for the Corinthians: " For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). He wanted them to have the good things of God!

But Paul also had a great fear: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

How did he beguile Eve? We have just studied this in Genesis 3! Don't ever say it couldn't happen to you!

Psalm 34:8—"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." The serpent attacked the goodness of God. "God is keeping you from something good. God is keeping you from something that you need!" That's a lie and he was a liar from the beginning!

"O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him" (Psalm 34:9). There's nothing you need that God will keep from you! "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing" (Psalm 34:10).

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10). We need to chose what side we are going to be on!

If you are walking on the path of obedience, what is God keeping from you? "For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: **no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly**" (Psalm 84:11).

Thank God for what you have and don't complain about what you don't have and can't do, etc. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:6-8). "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, **who giveth us richly all things to enjoy**" (1 Tim. 6:17).

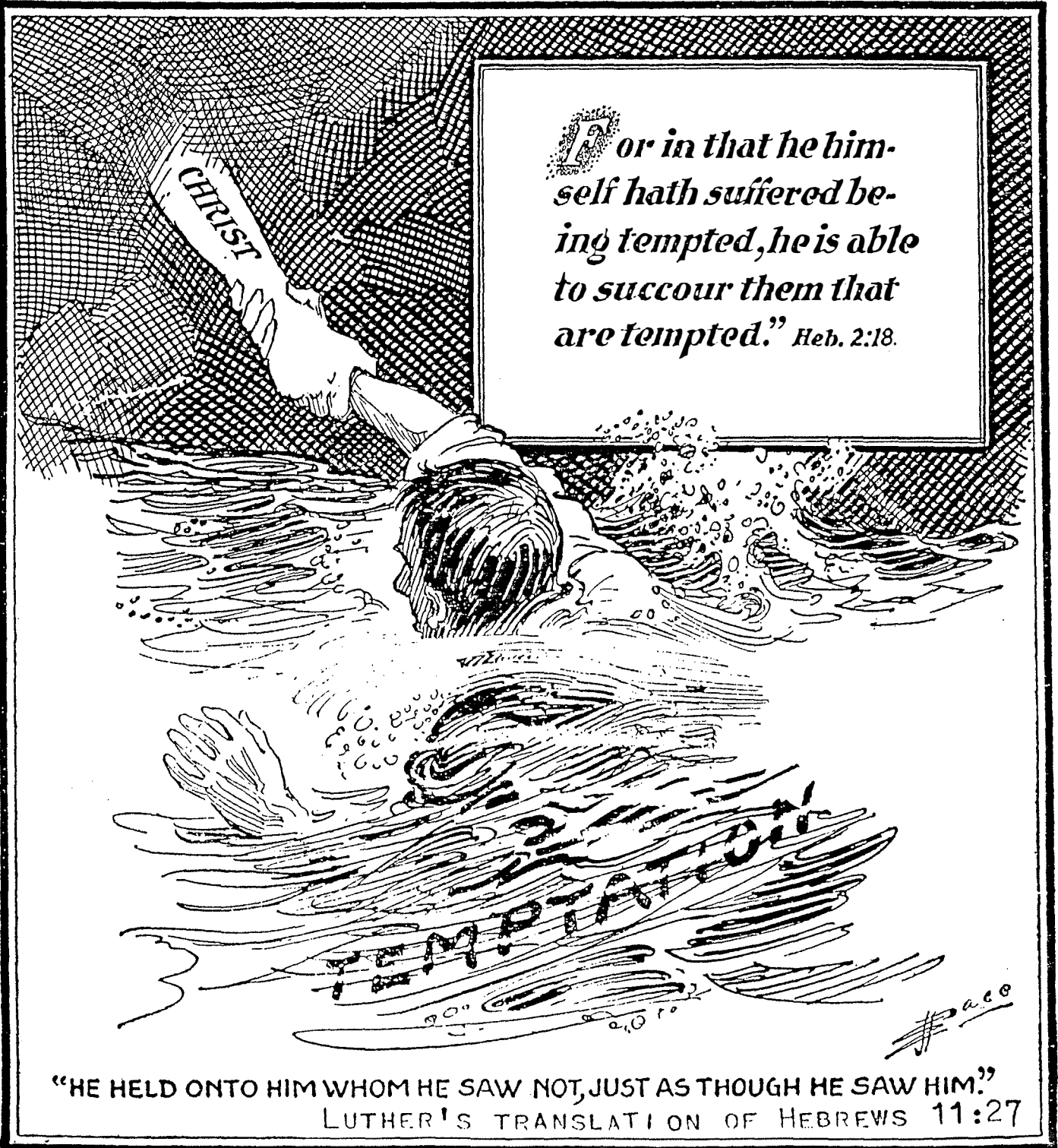
"And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, **for our good always**" (Deut. 6:24). Why does God give us commands? So that He can be a killjoy? To restrict us? To keep us from what we really need! No, God only has our good in mind. The devil's lie is that those who obey God are miserable! Every believer has the privilege of showing that this is not true!

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day **for thy good?**" (Deut. 10:12-13).

"And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, **for the good of them**, and of their children after them" (Jer. 32:39).

Is God keeping something back from you, or has God given you His everything? See Romans 8:32.

"WHEN THOU PASSEST THROUGH THE WATERS"



For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Heb. 2:18.

**"HE HELD ONTO HIM WHOM HE SAW NOT, JUST AS THOUGH HE SAW HIM."
LUTHER'S TRANSLATION OF HEBREWS 11:27**