

CHAPTER 11

Overcoming Temptations

Young Joe was very poor at spelling. Mabel, who sat next to him, was an honor student. On examination day Joe found many words he could not spell, and a thought came into his head: "Look at Mabel's paper -- she always has them right!" At first Joe yielded and gave in to the suggestion, not conscious that the teacher had noticed his actions. She decided to talk to him after the rest of the pupils had left, for she had always supposed that he was an honest boy. Finally it was time to collect the papers. She saw Joe bow his head for a moment, and suddenly tear up his examination sheet. "I am sorry," he said, "I can't hand this in." He had decided to take a zero rather than be dishonest. Calling Joe to her desk the teacher said with a glow of pride, "I saw your struggle, Joe, and I want you to know that I am very proud of a boy who conquered temptation. Today you really passed a much greater examination than just that of a spelling test!"

Like Joe, everyone of us struggles with temptations every day. Joe faced a real temptation. He thought that by cheating on this test he could gain a good grade. At first he yielded to the temptation and gave in to it. Later he overcame the temptation and did what was right, even though it was not easy to tear up his test. That was a real victory for Joe!

Suppose you were to go to the store and buy something for \$9.50. You give the girl at the cash register \$20.00 and she gives you your change. As you count your change you discover that she gave you \$15.50 (\$5.00 too much!). What might you be tempted to do?

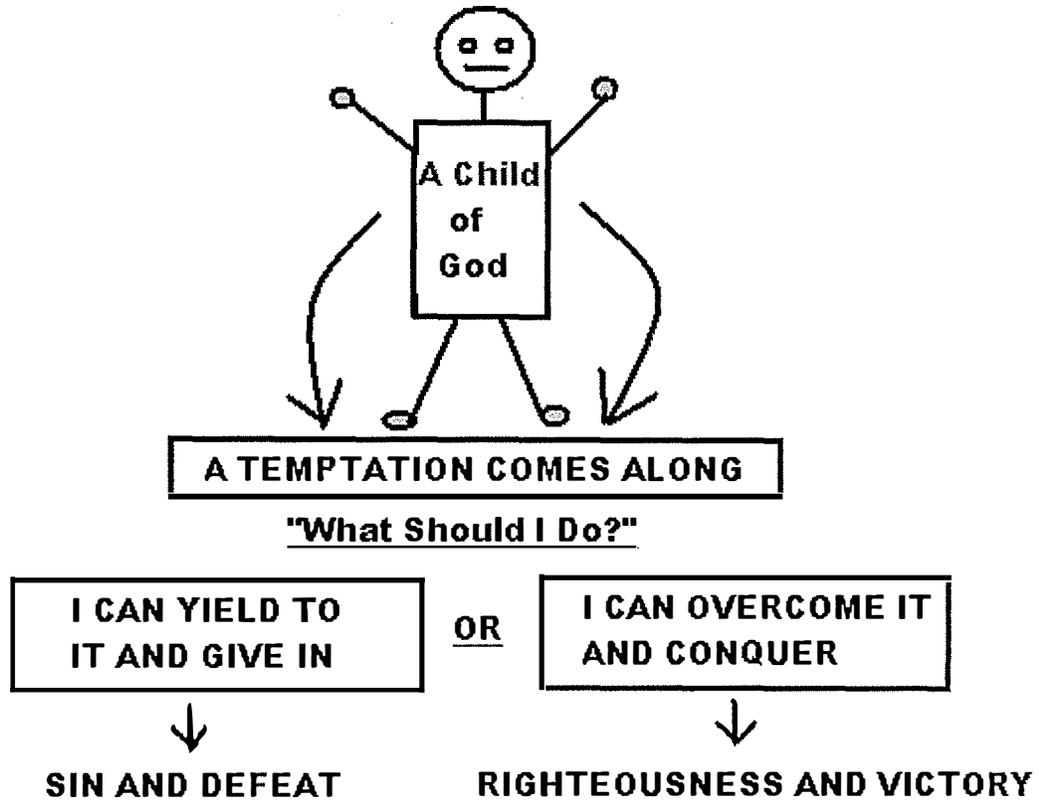
The thought might come into your mind, "This is her mistake, not mine. It's not my fault she gave me too much money. Besides, this store charges too much for its goods. They always make a profit on me, so why shouldn't I make a profit on them?" This is wrong thinking. What is the right thing to do in such a situation? The golden rule says "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). If you were the person behind the cash register, what would you want someone to do if he or she were to receive too much change?

Those Who Yielded and Those Who Conquered

The Bible gives us many examples of those who faced temptations. Often the person gave in to the temptation and sinned. Sometimes the person overcame the temptation and did what was right. Consider each of the following temptations (look up the Scripture passage for each one). If the person (or persons) YIELDED to the temptation and did what was wrong, put the letter "Y." If the person (or persons) CONQUERED the temptation and did what was right, put the letter "U."

1. _____ Eve was tempted to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:3).
2. _____ Isaac was tempted to lie about his wife in order to protect himself (Genesis 26:6-10).
3. _____ Jacob was tempted by his mother to deceive his father (Genesis 27:1-20).
4. _____ Joseph was tempted by a wicked woman (Genesis 39:7-15).
5. _____ Joseph was tempted to repay his brothers for all the evil they had done to him (Genesis 50:15-21).
6. _____ David was tempted to kill his great enemy, King Saul (1 Samuel 24:1-12).
7. _____ David was tempted by the sight of a beautiful woman (2 Samuel 11:1-5).
8. _____ The Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by Satan (see Matthew 4: 1-10).
9. _____ Peter was tempted to fall asleep (Matthew 26:36-45).
10. _____ Peter was tempted three times to deny His Lord (Matthew 26:69-75).
11. _____ Peter and John were tempted to stop preaching lest they be thrown into prison, punished and even put to death (Acts 4:13-31).
12. _____ Paul and Silas were tempted to get very discouraged and to start complaining because they were beaten and cast into a miserable dungeon (Acts 16:22-25).

As we can see from the above examples, when a person is tempted there are two choices. Consider the following illustration:



It Is Not A Sin To Be Tempted

There is a difference between being tempted and sinning. Everyone is tempted. There are temptations all around us, and they are normal and to be expected. The big question is this: What will I do with the temptation? It is not a sin to be tempted, but yielding to evil temptations leads to sin.

Was the Lord Jesus Christ really tempted (Hebrews 4:15 and compare Matthew chapter 4)?
 _____ Did He yield to the temptation and give in to it and finally sin? _____

In the following sentences, underline the part of the sentence that describes a sinful act (do not underline the part that describes the temptation):

1) I am outside taking a walk and suddenly I notice a bad magazine lying on the ground just a few feet ahead. I walk over towards it, pick it up and start looking at it; then I begin thinking wrong thoughts.

2) I am from a poor family and we have very little food. I pass the window of the bakery and see some loaves of bread. I walk into the shop and when the attendant is not looking, I grab two loaves and run out the door.

3) I see some loose change on the top of the dresser. My father emptied his pockets. I know that he does not keep a careful count of his loose change so he would never know that some of it was missing. After first checking to make sure no one is nearby, I grab some of the coins and put them in a secret place in my room.

Where Do Temptations Come From?

1. They Come From Satan.

Who tempted Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3 and Revelation 12:9)? _____ Who tempted the Lord Jesus (Matthew chapter 4)? _____ In fact, the devil is even called the T_____ (Matthew 4:3). The devil loves to entice people to do wrong and to lead them into what is sinful and wrong.

2. They Come From My Own Sinful Heart.

"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of H_____ O_____ L_____ (sinful desires) and enticed" (James 1:14). We must not always blame Satan every time we fall into sin! The real problem is with our own sinful hearts!

3. They Do *Not* Come From God.

Can you find a verse in James chapter one which says that God does not tempt any man? Verse: _____ God is not in the business of trying to make believers fall and fail. God does not want to see us *sin*, He wants to see us *win*! We have a faithful God who wants us to overcome the temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13). We do not have a God who tries to make His children do evil. God allows temptations to come our way, because He wants to TEST US and see if we will trust Him to help us to overcome these temptations. Every temptation that comes is a wonderful opportunity to trust God for victory and to learn that God is always FAITHFUL!

Don't Just See the Worm; Learn to Think About the Hook

Fish struggle with temptations also. For the fish, temptations are called fishhooks. The fish sees the delicious bait--a long juicy worm wiggling in the water. What a tempting sight! The fish goes for it and suddenly...HE'S HOOKED! The bait is not delicious anymore. It brings pain and suffering and finally DEATH!

The same thing is true with temptations that come our way. In James chapter 1 we find the same thing.

The worm is found in verse 14 – ENTICED!
The bite is found in verse 15 – SIN!
It ends up just like the fish (verse 15) – DEATH!

The same could be said of a mousetrap. The cheese looks so good and is so inviting! The cheese seems to say, "Come and taste me and enjoy me. I'm all yours!" The mouse comes and suddenly... DEATH! The fish is hooked and the mouse is caught!

We need to learn to look beyond the worm and think about the terrible hook. We need to learn to look beyond the cheese and think about the terrible trap. If the fish had really thought about the hook, would it have bitten? _____ If the mouse had really thought about the deathtrap, would it have eaten? _____

In Proverbs chapter 7 (verses 6-27) we read about a young man who was tempted by a wicked woman. Which verses describe the "worm" or the "cheese"?

_____ Which verses describe the "hook" or the "trap"?

Consider such things as being on dope (illegal drugs), smoking, drinking, etc. Why do people get involved with such things? What are some of the "worms" that attract people to these kinds of things? What are some of the "hooks" that come with each of these things? What are some of the dangers and traps?

Have you ever seen magazine advertisements for beer or wines or cigarettes? Do these advertisements show a person the alluring "worm" or do they show the sharp hook? What about television commercials for these things?

Before biting into a juicy worm, wouldn't it be a good idea for me to first check it out and make sure that there is not a sharp hook within? Before tasting the cheese, wouldn't it be wise to first make sure that there is no trap set to take my head off?

When I Fall Into Sin

When you fall down, get right back up (Proverbs 24:16). Don't stay down; get right back on your feet! Confess your sin! Forsake this sin! Learn from your failure. God can teach us many important lessons even from our times of failing and falling. If a fish feels the sharp hook once, it may be a little slower to bite the worm the next time!

When I Have Victory Over Sin

When you conquer the temptation, BE CAREFUL! A New Yorker had panted his way to the peak of Matterhorn (a great mountain). In glee he leaped into the air, both hands above his head. Just then, a cold gust nearly swept him off the peak. His guide shouted, "Down on your knees."

This is what Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth (1 Cor. 10:12): "Let him that thinketh he _____ take heed (be careful) lest he _____." It was like telling them, "Either get down on your knees or fall flat on your faces."

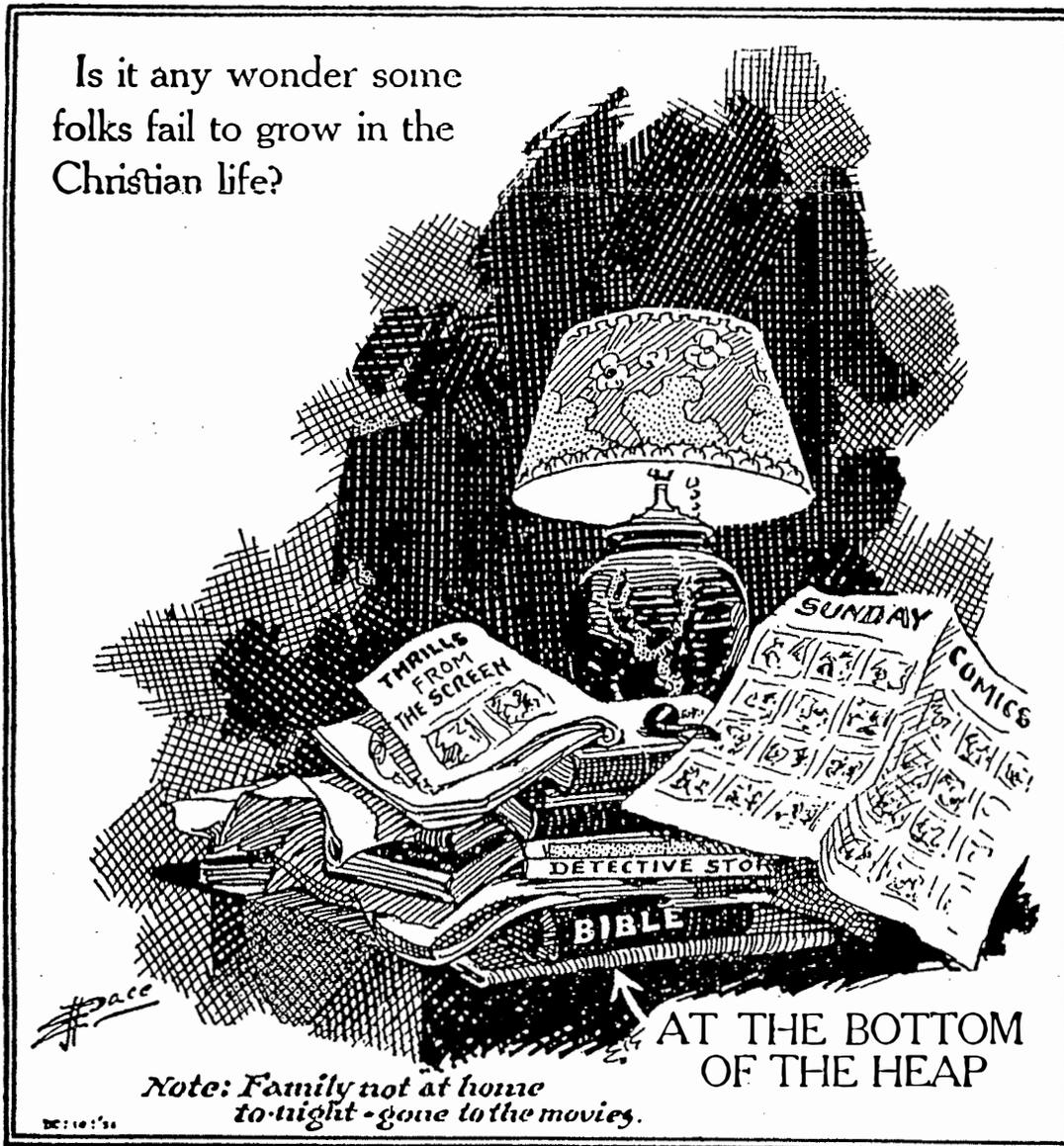
This is true of all of us. We are strong to face temptation when we are depending deeply on God. When we are surest of ourselves, we are also shakiest. The moment you think that you will never fall--WATCH OUT!

Yield not to (evil) temptation, for yielding is sin--
Each victory will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look Ever to Jesus, He will carry you through!

To him that o'ercometh, God giveth a crown
Through faith we shall conquer, though often cast down;
He, who is our Saviour, our strength will renew;
Look ever to Jesus, He will carry you through!

ASK THE SAVIOUR TO HELP YOU,
COMFORT, STRENGTHEN, AND KEEP YOU;
HE IS WILLING TO AID YOU,
HE WILL CARRY YOU THROUGH!

--Horatio R. Palmer



"Wherefore . . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Hebrews 12:1).

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).