

## How do we face temptations?

How are we supposed to face temptation? Which is the way to avoid it? Sadly, as much as we want to avoid it, the temptation is something that will come no matter what. The world in which we live, especially today, is in this way. How do we need to face the temptation once it is on our door?

The Bible says in James 4:7:

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”  
(James 4:7)

This verse indicates that the devil will flee from us. I think he will certainly not flee because of us, because he is confronted with us, but because we have submitted to God. The devil is the one who brings temptations into our lives. We are the ones who fall into them, but what are we supposed to do when facing one? As believers, we often know that they are wrong, we know what is correct, and we tend to prevent falling into them with our own strength. But this is not enough. We may try for a while an attempt to escape temptation and resist it with our strength, but sooner or later, we discover that we cannot face them in a proper way, and some of those times, when we do it in that way, we see that we fail. And then we start to examine where we made a mistake and what we lacked; we start to condemn ourselves, to think that we love sin more than God. There are so many consequences because of sin. Consequences that come into our lives because we fell into it. But in the end, it's much better if we avoid falling into them. So how can we properly face them? In the verse we read before, we said that we must first submit to God, then resist the devil, and he will flee from us. How do we submit to God? By having a relationship with Him. So, when that sin comes knocking on our doors, we need to resist him by having a relationship with God and trusting Him to fight that sin. How many times have we known that and taken it for granted? We thought we already had that power in us, acknowledging, of course, that it is given by God. Yet, we don't realize that this power needs to be maintained in

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our lives by having a constant relationship with Him. The same as when in the Bible it is said that our lamps need to be kept always burning.

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, **to make the lamps burn continually.**” (Leviticus 24:1, 2, emphasis added)

“Let your waist be girded and **your lamps burning**; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. (Luke 12:35, 36, emphasis added)

When we take the matter of having His protection and strength in us for granted, we carry on with our strength. Still, the Bible, in many places, is telling us to keep praying and reading His word. This means to have a relationship with Him, and I am not talking to non-believers here. Of course, this message might be good for them as well. But indeed we are talking about Christians and believers because they might forget to trust the Lord. I mean to have a constant relationship with Him. They might still be blessed in some areas of their lives. Even used by the Lord in some ways. Of course, by not having a proper relationship with the Lord, I'm not referring exclusively to people not praying, reading, or believing in His words at all. No. Maybe they will do that, and maybe the Lord will somehow bless their lives, but still, they will lack in this area of their lives, which will bring consequences. Some people might be reading the word and praying not all the days, but just some. Don't say: Ok, today is Sunday service anyway; I'm not going to have my devotional time with His word in the morning as I will listen to it in the service anyway, or tomorrow is another day, now I need to keep busy with something else. I'm not saying this for condemnation; I'm just saying it to awaken and edify us believers. I am also in this group. Often I have difficulty focusing on my relationship with the Lord. Why am I not going to God even when a temptation or other crucial moment comes? I know the law of God. I know what is wrong and right and want

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to carry on the right path. I should pray as the first thing when facing a difficult situation or a temptation, but I don't. Why? Because I am probably not so used to that, and I haven't built my relationship with the Lord. Sometimes we look at the Christian life as keeping certain laws and doing what is right, which is a part of it, but we don't consider it a relationship with the Lord. Instead, this should be the main thing and help us do the rest.

We might know the law, know what is right and what is not, and try to resist the temptation with our own strength, but we will eventually end up suffering because those things are much stronger than us. And just imagine if the devil is directly involved with that temptation. We know he is mostly involved in those situations. Many times, we're the ones who tempt ourselves. We are the ones who take the steps, but he is always there present at the moment. Just imagine him being so much stronger and smarter than us. He is not somebody with whom we can play or make jokes. We also know that no temptation that is too strong will come to us, and God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

By this verse, it seems that we can overcome all temptations coming in front of us, and this in part, should encourage us that the Lord doesn't want us to fall into temptations and that He is willing to help us. Where is the problem, then? Where is the problem when someone falls? In one of the phrases of our Father's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 it is said:

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

What does “And do not lead us into temptation” mean? We all know that the Lord is sovereign. Our steps depend on Him. In the Bible, it is even

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said that man does not direct his own steps (Proverbs 16:9). Does this mean that we are led to sin and will fall anyway in it? Not at all. Because at the other hand, He requires from us not to fall into it and not to live sinful lifestyles. He wants us to be saved. The Bible also says that He gave certain people up to vile passions because they did not glorify Him as God (Romans 1:21-25). This is what I think the passage of Matthew 6:13 means. He is preventing us from getting into a temptation we cannot stand. But if He is not with us, and we are given up to our own passions, as it is said in Romans 1:24, we are exposed to temptations we cannot stand at. All we have to do is to be with him. Then the passage in 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our limits, takes place. In the story of Job, we see that God was the One allowing things to happen in the life of Job. It was because the devil asked for trials and tribulations to come unto Job's life, but God had the final say. I am sure that if God allowed the devil to do whatever he wanted, Job wouldn't be alive. But there was a plan for the life of Job, and God did not allow for him to be tested beyond what he could handle. Therefore, we see that the best option is to be on God's side. Then He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able as 1 Corinthians 10:13 says and will protect us from falling far from Him. In this way whatever happens, will be for our good. Otherwise, we will be given up to our sinful desires, and the devil will do whatever he wants with us. The verse before 1 Corinthians 10:13, states:

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

This means that we can fall if we think that we stand; if we are too confident with ourselves. Pride is also a reason to be far from God. If we stick with Him, He will not lead us into temptation. God is sovereign, and we cannot change or control this, but if we are with Him, He will not lead us into temptation. This is what we have to pray for! We pray for something we cannot achieve by ourselves. We need God to do that. He is all-powerful and sovereign. It means that we cannot excuse

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ourselves with the fact that He is sovereign, but that we need rather to trust in Him as it depends on Him. He is greater than anything else.

This matter is serious and very important in our lives, and we need to take these issues seriously. How can we defeat the devil who is much stronger and smarter than us? By asking for help from someone stronger than him. That's why when the Bible tells us always to pray (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), it is for a reason. This is so fundamental. Jesus was always praying. He gave us a perfect example of that. It is important that we train ourselves to practice it. Sometimes it is not a matter if we have the desire to pray or read the word; we just need to do it. This should be a customary practice. Of course, we mustn't do it for the sake of doing it only or to do it to feel better and to say: "I've done what I was supposed to." No. We do that because we acknowledge our weaknesses and need His strength. And if sometimes we don't find an answer straight away, we need to keep doing it until we find it. Do you remember the parable of the unjust judge and the widow who was asking him for justice (Luke 18:1-5)? This is the way we need to be persistent. When we talk about being persistent, it is not just a matter of blindly persisting but also examining ourselves and to pray the Lord to help us change our attitude and have more faith. The fact that sometimes He might not be answering us when we ask Him for something might indicate that there is something wrong. I'm not saying that we have sinned in something particular, even if this might be the case, but I'm saying that we might have doubted or lacked forgiveness. It might be for this or other reasons; we need to examine ourselves. I'm not pointing out or saying what exactly your problem might be; I am just suggesting. I'm saying that when we pray and see something is not answered, this could be due to the time in which we live because the Lord probably has reserved things for us, but we will have them in His time. Still, some of the reasons we do not receive something might be because of something else that needs to be sorted out in our lives. I am also not necessarily talking about something particular we're asking for. We might be asking to see God and desire His presence and blessings in our lives. When we see that we don't receive an answer, we start to examine ourselves to see

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if there is any situation or even a hidden sin that we don't know of. This is also the way the Lord shows us and sheds light in our hearts so that we can change that. By passing through a desert where we don't have a clear answer many times and where our hearts are tested. We change those things we find out in us by going to Him with them. Someone might be asking: "Why is that He doesn't just change that in us without going through this process?". He could do that, of course, but the reason why we need to go through a desert, a trial, and we need to discover and see our sin, **is because this makes us humble. This attitude is the one that pleases the Lord most.**

"And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." (Deuteronomy 8:2)

This verse talks about the reason He led His nation Israel to go through a desert.

Often God speaks to us while we go through a desert. On the contrary we are inclined to think that better we feel, closer to God we are and we will hear more His voice. It is not always in this way. We can even say that sometimes these are not the conditions to have a deeper relationship with Him. In Osea 2:14, it is said:

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her."

Here God compares His nation Israel to an unfaithful woman because instead of following, serving, and loving Him, they went after other foreign gods and idols. When we fall into sin and temptation and keep doing it, we are like that unfaithful woman. This example is for us as well. As she was unfaithful, He decided to take her to the desert, where He would talk to her. God uses these moments where He places us through a trial, lets us see our sins, and then talks to us. A desert could not necessarily be for what we only esteem as sinful but also for things

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we need to discover in our hearts or to find a deeper relationship with God. The Bible gives a good example regarding getting into depth with God.

<sup>46</sup>“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? <sup>47</sup>Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: <sup>48</sup>He is like a man building a house, **who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock**. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was <sup>[i]</sup>founded on the rock. <sup>49</sup>But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” (Luke 6:46-49, emphasis added)

This is the example of the man who built his house on the rock. We know that the rock is Jesus. It is said that he dug deep in the ground to find the rock. So, we conclude that as going through trials and a desert is good because it helps us examine ourselves and get deeper into God. The parable of the house on the rock also tells us that we need to dig deeper, so that we can find a foundation. It is good at the beginning of someone’s life when he finds the rock, and it is good also afterward as each person needs to examine from time to time himself.

So, when we go through a spiritual drought, we must persevere and examine what this is for. And the Lord doesn't delay. He will actually show up and answer us. There were many such cases in the Book of the Psalms where we read about people crying day and night to the Lord without having a clear answer. So, what is important is to have the practice of praying and looking for answers from the Lord, even if we don't always find them straight away. I'm saying this to those who have been born again and have a relationship with the Lord. When we convert to Him, the heavens' gates are open to us. We have an entrance to heaven. The matter is that sometimes we're not using it. To pray is not a gift. It is not like one of those unique gifts given to you for a specific

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purpose, and it is not either some kind of charisma. Of course, there will be people more dedicated to it, but this is something asked of all Christians and believers. There's no exception. So, this is how we can defeat temptation. What is most important and what is the Christian faith built on is God and our relationship with Him. The Christian faith is not built on the fact that we are righteous and keep the law. You mustn't misunderstand me here. Of course, this is part of it, but our relationship with the Lord is essential. We love God because we know Him. It is the same as when we know some person. We know that person because we have a relationship with him. Because we talk with him, we know what he likes or dislikes. We can often build an image in our minds of someone, and that might be the wrong image. This changes when we start having conversations and communion with that person.

This relationship and communion with Jesus are expressed in having Him as a friend, starting our day praising Him and asking Him to accompany us. This mustn't be done only when we are in a particular need. What God desires for us is different. He sees and examines our hearts and knows when we want to use Him just to sort out our situations and personal issues. This also determines if our prayers will be answered. In the same way, we mustn't look for God only when we see we are in front of temptation. We need to have done that before that moment arrives. Many times we want just the final product; we just want the blessing of the relationship with God. Imagine if you have a friend and look to be with that friend only when you are in need. Indeed friends are there to help us, but what would he think if you look for him only in those moments? We need instead to maintain that relationship at any moment. This is very fundamental because in heaven we will have a perfect relationship with Him. Still, it needs to start from here. If we see that we don't have that natural desire to draw to God and look for Him at any moment, and not only when we are in trouble, we need to ask Him to help us develop that kind of special relationship. Because this is what is really important – to love Him. This is also the first commandment.



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“Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37, 38)

This is what He desires for us. His love helps us to develop that relationship. The more we know about His love and experience His mercy, the more we will love Him and will love our neighbor as well. This kind of relationship is a foundation for our lives. Often, Christian life could seem like just following and keeping commandments, doing what is right, and avoiding what is wrong, but even though this is a part of it, it is not all. Many people can do what is right for personal gratification, while in the Christian life, the focus doesn't turn around us but around God. We must do what is right in front of Him and for Him. When we accept and comprehend it, and even when we don't comprehend it sometimes. When our main focus is just observing the commandments, and we do it for ourselves only, when the time comes to really succeed in that and practice them, we see that we don't possess the power to perform them. When we do them instead for Him because we love Him and we fear Him, and this way, we develop a relationship with Him, then we succeed. I am not saying that Christians, even those maintaining a relationship with God, don't fail or sin. We all sin, but the difference is in the capability we receive from Him to avoid that to happen frequently, to raise up after we fall and sometimes also in the kind of sin. Christianity could turn into a practice (bluntly observing the commandments and personal gratification) also for those who know God and are born again. We can even say that it could be a common occurrence. Apostle Paul wrote something about this in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

<sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become

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clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Here it is indicated that even though believers have the same foundation, they could be built with different materials. To me, this has to do with the way a believer lives. Some people might have found Christ and repented, but they still will not be as dedicated as others. We all need to have a foundation, but how we will build on it and which materials we will use is up to us. This matter depends on our relationship with the Lord. It depends on our holiness as well. We are all weak in our flesh, but always falling in sins, and not taking the issue seriously also means that we probably build with straw or wood, which are materials that do not endure the fire. This means that the Bible is encouraging us to place an effort, to aim to be better in a way in our relationship with God and closer to Him.

Sometimes people might be looking just for the blessing the Christian life can bring to someone. Also believers could focus more on that and be praying for that. While this is not wrong by itself, we need to know that the Giver of the blessings is much more important than the blessings themselves and the things He can provide. He even says in His word: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)

This indicates that we need first to glorify Him because this is what the Kingdom of Heaven is about – glorifying God and seeking Him first. Then it is said that all the rest shall be added. It is even said that our prayer mustn't be focused mainly on that – for the things of this life. It is not that we mustn't pray at all, but it is said that the heathen (people who do not know God) look for those things first. This is also what He was referring to when saying that they make vain repetitions.

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“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”

Straight after saying that we mustn't use vain repetitions, He says that our Father knows the things we need before we ask Him. I think He was referring to the things we use, the things that sometimes we esteem as blessings but are just part of the things we need to live a proper life.

This means that we can pray occasionally for what we need – food, clothing, etc. but it mustn't be our main focus when praying. Our main petition should be about what glorifies God. Pure life, for example, pleasing God and having Him in the first place, glorifies Him. This is one of the things I should be praying for. At times I could be praying to the Lord to give me a godly spouse, but this should be done at times because this thing falls under the things that shall be added to me. To have a pure life instead should be one of my main and daily petitions. When we focus on looking for the Lord for certain blessings only, it happens that when a trial comes, and we want to be delivered it doesn't happen because we haven't truly looked for Him before that. We just look for Him when trouble comes in our life. He knows the attitude of our hearts.

We want to be delivered when we are in a trial or going through a tough moment, and we want to be used by the Lord, and we start saying how many things we left behind, how many things we surrendered, and we think that the Lord has to answer our petitions because of that. In this way we make it sound like it is by the works we've done while the Bible explicitly says that it is by faith, meaning that we need to have a relationship with Him and to believe in Him.

There are some practical examples in the Bible where we see how people looked more for what the Lord can provide, I mean they looked more for their commodity and material needs than the spiritual blessings

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and Him. They didn't have faith in Him. This happened to the Israelites in the desert.

<sup>1</sup>Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup>Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. <sup>7</sup>And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." <sup>8</sup>Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; <sup>9</sup>nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; <sup>10</sup>nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup>Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)

This passage talks of the nation of Israel who were going through the desert and it says that all of them passed through the sea and were baptized in Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, and ate spiritual food. This indicates that they had experiences with God, and we can compare them with today's believers. Yet, it is said that God wasn't pleased with all of them because as they went through the desert, they complained, fell into idol worship, and committed sexual immorality. This means it is not enough to be a believer and have repented once ago. I think they lacked faith and didn't develop it because they didn't have a proper relationship with God. We can see they were looking and complaining mostly about what was material like food and water, things that I think God was anyway going to

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provide for them. They were focused more on what God can provide for them than God Himself and His promises.

As we already mentioned, we often want to develop a relationship with God and trust in Him only in times of need or when we have already fallen into temptation. Having a life free of chains and addictions is built on the fact that we avoid falling into them much before they come. We are not striving to pursue a better relationship with God and grow in faith, only when we fall, but even when we haven't fallen and are not in danger. It is to say that we are not seeking God only to be addiction free but because we love Him.

Even though the scripture we find in Romans 8:28, saying: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." it is not something that we can lean on when facing temptation, it is of a great treasure and help while we recover after falling. It is of great help if we understand the right context in which it is written. It is a scripture for those who believe in God and fear Him. It is for those who want to please Him, and even though they didn't want, they failed God in some way. When this happens to a spiritual person, he becomes sorrowful, not only for the consequences coming because of that sin but because he hurt the heart of God. Many people could become sorrowful because they lost some things such as a job, position, or dignity, but not all feel bad because they sinned in front of God. The scripture however speaks of how godly people feel after failing God (Psalm 51, Psalm 32:3-5, Matthew 26:75).

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones grew old  
Through my groaning all the day long.

<sup>4</sup> For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. *Selah*

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I have not hidden.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah* (Psalm 32:3-5)

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This psalm describes how a believer feels when sinning. Surely, the people living those experiences didn't take some of the promises of God as a way to excuse themselves or hear someone saying to them: "Don't worry all is fine. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ". Even when believers know these promises or hear them from someone, they don't take matters lightly. They know how they feel. Even when they feel comforted by God and His promises, they went through sorrow before that.

The entire chapter of Romans 8 talks about consolation and comfort for believers. There are scriptures such as:

"*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose." (Romans 8:28)

"What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Those scriptures contain very valuable promises and are encouraging. We have to emphasize that the scriptures mentioned above encourage those who are afflicted and sorrowful for what they have done, and they don't use them as an excuse. The Bible doesn't just talk of unlimited joy, happiness, and success. These are things that we could achieve in this life, and God can help us with that, but there is also sorrow, and Jesus said: "Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

However, when we trust in God and take His promises seriously, even when we fall into sin, we learn something from it, and even if the experience is painful, we become better persons after that. By "better persons" I mean persons who draw closer to God. I can see it in my life

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too. Each time something wrong happened to me, or I failed God, I learned from it. In this way, I could see in a better way my weak points. This made me more humble, and not so confident in myself. I don't know, but it's possible that this prevented me from making an even bigger mistake afterward. Only God knows that. We cannot however say this each time we fall, but we need to trust God. In this way, when we love God and we take matters in the right way, that passage in Romans 8:28 saying that all things work together for good to those who love God, takes place.

You can check out the [author's website](#) for more information.