What do we need to do when we are exposed to temptations? Is there any way to escape them? Which is the key?

 We have to say that no one is completely secured when we speak about temptations and even I that I’m writing about this, can fall. We see through situations and give many examples of what a temptation is. There are sexual temptations, there are also temptations related with addictions or money or a desire to have something or someone might be just tempted to react in an impulsive way or get angry and upset about something. All of these things all together take part of what a temptation is. As we said, no one is secured of no falling into it. We see examples in the Bible as the one of king David who commited adultery and other sins later on came in consequence of it. (2 Samuel 11)

We also read in Proverbs 7:24-26

“Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, **and all who were slain by her were strong men**.”

 We are speaking for strong persons here. Strong in faith obviously. In this chapter 7 of Proverbs speaks about an adulteress woman who entices a person to go with her. It is spoken about adultery, but in general to me it speaks about any kind of sin and temptation.

In Hebrews 12:1,2 we read:

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin **which so easily ensnares us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

 It speaks about two things here: about the sin and how to run the race with endurance and overcome this sin – by looking into Jesus. It says that the sin is easily ensnaring us. **The sin might be also addictive**. Many times what really kept me from falling into sin was that I knew that I was going to repeat it after again and maybe again. I am not referring to addictive substances here, but to the sin in itself in general. The sin ensnares us and enslaves us quickly, giving us an apparent freedom, but leading us to death at the end. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Proverbs 14:12

 You start depending on it. With saying this I am not saying that I for example never sin. The Bible speaks that all of us are sinners and there is also a sin dwelling in us and even godly people battle with it daily, but there is difference between this kind of sin (the natural one that we still need to be cleansed of) and the one that we do more purposely or better said consciously. Yes all of the sin we do is done by us and we are responsible for it, but there are some sins done with more intention by our side, with more purpose, knowing already what we are doing. Surely we need to repent from all sin, but there is one done more consciously and the weight, if we can say so, is heavier. The Bible also makes difference for the kinds of sin commited. Obviouly also the people committing the rest of sins, those other ones, need as well His grace to be forgiven. Everything comes to this, because without His grace we can’t survive, no matter what sin we have done.

 And we have to say that the Bible speaks about the believers getting sanctified and becoming more as Jesus by being transformed according to His image. “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

 Obviously it is easy to conclude that everyone is a sinner and to justify our behavior by this. A spiritual person that has been reborn changes and sanctifies himself by looking into Jesus.

 Sin by himself is actually “missing the mark”. This is the other meaning of the Greek word used for sin in the New testament. And how we can hit that mark, how can we do the things in the right way? Only by Jesus and His power dwelling in us. It is never by our own strength.

 One of the ways to protect ourselves from the sin and temptation is to realize that we can easily fall into it, that we are never completely over it, that only by the blood of Jesus and by faith in Him, we can stand and overcome it. To think that we are already strong and that nothing and never can happen, is to think that we can overcome it by ourselves and to rely on our own strength. We do not stand by ourselves, by our strength, but by Him.

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

Notice that here it speaks for the one who **thinks** that he stands, not for the one who actually does. He was probably thinking that he is able enough already to resist and therefore he was thinking to stand.

With this I am not saying that we need to live constantly in fear of falling into sin, because it is wrong as well, but to fear God and be respectful to Him. This is one of the keys.

We can have a look as well on the verse that comes right after the previous one.

“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

 This is an invitation and a kind of promise for us to know that not necessary we have to fall into a temptation, even if it looks strong, but we need to resist it, standing in the faith.

 What do we need to do when we are tempted, when we are in front of the temptation and everything in us cries out and desires that sin? Yeah, it is easy to say and harder to do, but nevertheless, we need to resist it. The first option obviously is to pray in that very moment. We always need to do it, even if sometimes we can not focus, but is a very good solution. Some other times, we need to resist the temptation and later on it will be gone for sure. We just need to resist. Obviously one of the main solutions is also to turn away from that particular situation or temptation. We need to realize our weakness and avoid it as well. This kind of attitude should be always present in us. Sometimes we need to “flee” from that sin or temptation. “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Timothy 2:22

 Many times we also need to burn ourselves, so that we can know how much it hurts and in this way to avoid it the next time. There were times this happened to me and helped me to learn my lesson. Same as a small kid to which has been said not to touch the pot on the stove, but later on is doing it and in this way learns his lesson. True Christians know that even though God forgives sin if we truly acknowledge it and our responsibility toward it and loves us, He still corrects His children for that sin. Sometimes the correction is not pleasant, but is for our good. In Hebrews 12:7-11 we read:

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

 We also have to know that when God is warning you about something or gives you a word, it is firstly for you most of the times, if not all of them, so that He can warn you. Thinking that we are above all and the word we receive is mostly for the others, will make us to lower our guard and will ease falling into temptation or sin. Every time, even when we know that certain word we receive is for the others, we need to examine ourselves if we do what that word says. Because when God sends His word or warns us, He is doing that , because He wants us to avoid danger and failure. He doesn’t want to hurt us by correcting us, but on the contrary, He wants to spare us the consequences of sin and the pain it causes.

“Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.” Proverbs 23:13

 This is the correction of God toward us. He knows our future if we continue in our own way. That’s why He wants us to avoid that. Obviously this is the character of God and if He corrects someone, it is for a purpose and for good. Not like many persons who unfortunately have misunderstood this part and correct someone or their own children without any valuable purpose and do it just for the sake of it, but what the Bible says is that God does it for our good. That’s why we need to understand very well this verse and have experiences before we can discern and correct someone. God’s example of how He is dealing with His children is the best example ever we can find on how we need to deal with other people and our own children.

 One of the reasons for us as well to avoid falling into sin, beside that can entangle us, is that there are consequences of each sin. We can see this in the story of King David.

“Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun.” 1 Samuel 9-11

 This was said by the prophet Nathan to David, after he commited adultery with the wife of Uriah. We can see two things that were going to happen to him – the sword was never going to depart from his house and his wives were going to be taken away from him. Exactly the same things that he did. He took the wife of his neighbor and killed him by sending him to the toughest place of war leaving him there.

 David repented and was forgiven, but there were still these consequences. Many times God corrects us for our sin, so that we can know the gravity of it and not to return again there to do it. He knows that if we do it again and again we can end up worse and lose everything. He wants us to avoid that, because He loves us. That’s why He is correcting us – for love.

Even though God can forgive us and cleanse us from that sin, we will still bear the consequences of it. This is more referred to the sins commited intentionally by us.

There is another verse that also speaks on this topic.

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; **fear** the Lord and **depart from evil**. It will be **health** to your flesh, and **strength** to your bones.” Proverbs 3:7,8

We can see here in this verse what the fear of the Lord and departing from evil produces – health and strength. Obviously this is not only referred to our physical body, but to our spirit and soul as well, as bones are something that is in us and obviously Christians do get physically sick and most of the times is not because of their sin.

 So if the fear of the Lord and departing from evil means health, what then a lack of fear and not departing from evil (sinning) will bring? A disease, sickness, pain. Most of the times this disease is in the spirit and in the soul. There is a consequence from the sin. Most of the times the Lord is leaving us feel that, so that we can learn and know where the sin is leading us. Because He is a loving Father and He doesn’t want us to perish and get really hurt. That’s why He is letting us feel that pain eventhough it endures for a bit, but it happens, so that we can know.

 That’s why He is not avoiding or preventing us to feel pain along the way, so that we can avoid a much greater pain. Our concept for love sometimes is that love will always let us feel fine and will give us whatever we feel like, but the true love of God is teaching us how to live, so that we can be fine at the end. He loves us not because He is not letting us feel pain, but because He is showing us the right path.

 Speaking about sin and temptation, we have to know that our eyes and our desire go automatically toward something wrong. The sin dwells in our members as it is said in Romans 7:23

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

 Meaning that we will be attracted by it. If we are in front of something or an image that we are not supposed to look at (like pornographic image for example) or we are about to do something wrong, our sinful desire and eyes will automatically go toward it. And this is just the beginning. This is how it starts.

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved , he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. **Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”** James 1:12-15

 There is a process until our desire conceives the sin, but we need to stop it before that. If we have the grace of God in our life and we are careful, we can avoid it. “Blessed is the man who endures temptation…” There is a reward for those who endure the temptation, even though at that very time might not seem so. If someone is a Christian and he knows God, he will see that. We are blessed every time we endure it.

 Speaking about all of this, I am not saying that we will be probably always able to avoid any sin and mistake, but if it happens for us to sin, we need to know that God is faithful to forgive us and renew our mind and strength. **I am not saying either that we are sinless if we avoid falling into certain sins.** No, we are not. There will be always something in us that we will need to repent from and to be completely sinless and clean we need the grace of God in our life. Without it, is impossible. We are not clean because we are not sinning, but because the grace of God cleanses us. We are also Christians because of that. No one can follow His footsteps without His grace. We are avoiding sin, because we don’t want to hurt Him and we want to please Him. And also because we don’t want to complicate our life with more sin. Because this is what the sin does. It complicates more our life and damages our relationship with the Lord. And even if someone is avoiding certain sins, he is not really clean or righteous because of that, but because of the grace of the Lord. There are persons who do not do certain things, but they are still not clean, because they lack this grace in their life. This is what we need, so that our life can be clean from the inside.

 We also need to see at how exactly a real Christian person is looking at sin. A person who has been truly born again, gives value to the work of Christ on the cross and really appreciates His grace. Sinning is never the same after someone comes to know God and His grace. That person looks differently at sin and doesn’t commit it so easily and desire to live in holiness.

 The word of God even declares it more boldly in 1 John 3:2-9

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”

 We see here in these passages saying that whoever abides in Him does not sin. Obviously it speaks about practicing sin, like persevering and always returning in the same sin, something of which the Bible clearly speaks against. In the first chapter of John also says that no one can say that he is without sin, therefore we confirm that it speaks more of persevering into sin and taking it as something usual. The sin for a man of God is not something normal, as he is already a new creation in Christ. He has been changed, redeemed and reborn from God. His nature is different. He rejoices with the truth. There will still be sin dwelling in his members, but now he is having a way to fight it. He is no longer slave to it. He can go back to it, but as long as He dwells in Christ, he is having a victory over it. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. This is a very good and effective (and only) way for us to overcome temptation, if we seek Him – to be reborn from Him. This is what everyone looking for God must somehow desire. Obviously this happens only by His grace in our life. This is what is giving us a guarantee to overcome. Can a new born person fall into sin? Of course he can, but he will not easily go back to it. It is not easy for those who persevere in sin after being touched by God. They struggle and God is the one who lets them struggle, because He doesn’t want them to perish. He will do everything possible to bring them back to the right way, to bring them back to Him. This is His love.

 With all of this I am not saying that a person never sins and a new born Christians never sins, but that this is not a part of their nature anymore. A christian will sin, but most of the times is not done purposely or in a premeditated way. With this he is of course still accountable in front of God. Many times after I repented and became a Christian, I fell and repeated certain sins, but after I sincerely repented and God forgave me. He looks at our attitude and if we are truly sorry and if we fear Him. The man who really fears Him, will be as well truly sorry after committing a sin. We need to ask Him to place this kind of fear in us.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8,9

We see from these verses that no one can say that he has no sin. What only changes is the attitude toward it and obviously the righteous (the persons born from Him) sanctify their life and don’t persevere in sin and the others don’t actually care a lot about how their heart and life is.

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 2:1

The purpose is that we may not sin. This is what the first verse of the next chapter of 1 John says. And if we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, someone who can forgive us – Jesus Christ. It says it in a way that clearly states that our intention must be to avoid sin, to preserve ourselves from it. But **if in case** we sin, then we can go and ask Jesus with a trust and faith, to forgive us.

 We have to know as well that sin is not performed with our actions only, but with our mind and heart also. Even though some people don’t commit great sins by their actions, they still sin in their heart.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already commited adultery with her in **his heart**.” Matthew 5:27,28

 This is just one of the examples of what the scripture says about sinning in the heart, but there can be many different sins that actually take place in our heart. (Mark 7:21, 22)

 The real Christians have a desire to purify their heart from any sin, even in their thoughts. As they can not avoid all, they see themselves as sinners and repent in front of God.

 Other people instead, focus only on preventing external, or phisically commited sins and don‘t focus to clean their hearts from the sin that is on the inside. Jesus looks at the deepest part of our being. He seeks for that kind of purity. It is imposible for us to fullfil, if not by His grace alone. His grace impowers us to be clean from the inside of our hearts. Christians though are not always in that state, but they are looking for it and this is their desire. There are those moments when they get in a proper relation with God and He cleanses them. It is only by faith and depending on Him. To be clean from the inside and to look for that relationship with God gives us much more security of not falling into all the other sins. As we know, everything starts from the heart, so if we fight it and prevent it from there by His grace, then also the next action toward it will be prevented. This is what we need to do – to confess, to admit our sins to God and to ask Him to cleanse us.