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TEMPTATION

Background

The word 'temptation' refers to the tendency and enticement either by Satan or by man's unregenerate nature ('the flesh') to provide opportunity for sin, which is rebellion against God. Temptation focuses on the desires and cravings of human nature, rather than doing what is right in God's sight. No human being is above being tempted or taking opportunity for sin. The Bible distinguishes between, on the one hand, *temptation* (that is common to man, and not, in itself, sin) which is always Satan-initiated, is aimed at drawing us into sin, and brings guilt and failure, and separates us from God – to pull us down – and, on the other hand, *testing*, which is allowed by God, but with the object of teaching us endurance and strengthening our faith – to build us up.

Genesis **4**:7; **26**:10; 1 Kings **22**:21; Nehemiah **9**:17; Psalm **106**:14; Isaiah **59**:2; Luke **22**:31; John**16**:8; 1 Corinthians **10**:13; James **1**:12-14.

Temptation

God does not tempt anyone. It is Satan's desire through temptation to entice man into sin by his own lust (the desire to do what is prohibited in God's Word) and thus break fellowship with the holy God. Sin, in fulness, then brings death.

Deuteronomy **5**:7–21; Isaiah **59**:2; Romans **6**:23; James **1**:13–15.

Scripture records, for our instruction, biblical figures who fell into sin through temptation. Examples include Adam and Eve (pride, through acceptance of Satan's lie), Abraham (through fear), David (through pride, and later lust and murder), Peter (through self-pride), and Ananias (through willingness to seek to deceive the apostle concerning money). The major sources of temptation are: demonic enticement; the deception of man's desire for self-gratification, self-justification, human pride and power; and the rebellious nature of the world's value system.

Genesis **3**:4–5; **11**:4; **12**:13; **14**:4; Leviticus **26**:19; Numbers **20**:2; **27**:14; Deuteronomy **8**:18; 1 Samuel **13**:11–13a; 2 Samuel **11**:2–4; **11**:15; 2 Samuel **13**:11–14; 1 Chronicles **21**:1–3; Matthew **20**:21; **23**:27; Acts **5**:2–3, 9; 1 Timothy **3**:3; James **4**:4; 1 John **2**:16; Revelation **12**:9.

Examples of biblical figures who rejected temptation include: Abraham (who took no reward from the king of Sodom); Elisha (who refused payment for healing); Peter (who rejected money from Simon to buy a spiritual gift); and, of course, supremely, the Lord Jesus (who defeated Satan's attempt to entrap him with the Word of God). The main strategy by which Satan tries to draw us into temptation is to get us to believe a lie, and accept licence by doubting the truth of God's Word.

Genesis **14**:21-24; 2 Kings **5**:16; Matthew **4**:3-10; John **8**:44; Acts **8**:20-21.

To combat temptation it is necessary to recognise our weaknesses; avoid opportunity for sin; quench the fiery darts of the enemy by our faith in God and his promises; reject the world-value system by submitting to the Lord Jesus, and resisting Satan with the Word of God. God promises a way to escape from temptation, and we can repent quickly when we fall.

To stand against the wiles of the devil we must humble ourselves and not be ignorant of his devices, put on the whole armour of God, believe and trust his Word, and pray at all times.

Genesis **39**:12; Matthew **26**:41; John **4**:50 (KJV); 1 Corinthians **10**:13; 2 Corinthians **2**:11; Ephesians **6**:11–18; James **4**:7; 1 Peter **5**:6-9; 1 John **5**:4; Revelation **2**:5.

Testings

The testing times that God gives are primarily to know what is in man's heart (rather than to entice into sin) and to prove or test whether a person will obey his commandments and instructions or not. Man's rebellion in tempting God or putting him to the test is sin. This always results in judgment, and, for some, entry to their promised land is denied.

Exodus **16**:4; **17**:7–8; Numbers **14**:22–23; Deuteronomy **6**:16; **8**:2; **11**:16; Psalm **78**:18, 21-22; **106**:14; Matthew **4**:7.

Abraham was tested when God told him to offer his promised son Isaac as a sacrifice at Mount Moriah, yet he believed God's goodness. Job was tested by the removal of all he had, yet by faith acknowledged God's purpose

in his suffering. Both were given a vision of resurrection. Moses was tested through the rebellion of the people of Israel, and Hezekiah was tested on account of his foolishness. Nations are also tested, as when Israel's enemies were left nearby, to see whether Israel would obey the Lord and keep to his way. God's purpose in these testings of the righteous and of the rebellious was to refine their character, so they might listen to him and walk more closely in his ways, so that he might bless them.

Genesis **22**:1–2, 5-8; Exodus **17**:2–8; Numbers **20**:8–12; Judges **2**:21–23; **3**:1, 4; 2 Chronicles **32**:31; Job **19**:25–26; **23**:8–10; Psalm **66**:10–12; **95**:8; Isaiah **48**:10; Jeremiah **9**:7; Daniel **11**:35; Malachi **3**:2–3.

Paul was given a 'thorn in the flesh' to keep him from pride (from being '*exalted above measure*') to remind him, even as he was serving the Lord with great humility and in severe testing, that, *My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness . . .* that the power of Christ might rest upon him. See Acts **20**:19; 2 Corinthians **12**:7–9 (KJV); Galatians **4**:14.

Those who endure testings will receive a crown of life, because endurance demonstrates a love for Jesus, and trains his disciples to be overcomers. God helps us to endure temptations and testings by providing a way out. He knows how to rescue the godly from trials. Jesus has overcome the world, and since the One that is in us is greater than the one who is in the world, our faith in the Son of God secures our victory as overcomers. These disciples overcame Satan *by the Blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and they did not . . shrink from death*. Jesus has many promises for those who overcome. If we patiently endure, we will receive a crown that will last for ever.

1 Corinthians **9**:25; **10**:13; James **1**:12; 2 Peter **2**:9; Revelation chapters **2** and **3**; **12**:11.