



Reflections

... each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. (James 1:14 NKJ)

Christians, and those who have not come to Christ, are both tested by temptations, often daily. We are all faced with opportunities to indulge our appetites in pursuing addictions, wealth, revenge, and coveting along with many other things that can cause us to be side-tracked or misdirected in our lives. Many find themselves “enslaved” by one or more of these desires that seem to take over their lives. When we yield to these captivating enticements we can, too late, find that our lives are centered around unhealthy desires and pursuits and we are at a loss as to how to restore balance to an increasingly out-of-control existence. How did it happen, we might ask ourselves?

The Apostle John explains the process when he tells us... *For all that is in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world. (1John 2:16 NKJ)* Many things seem irresistible upon first look and then fade into something that has nothing good to offer. Frequently those irresistible temptations turn out to be experiences that have devastating outcomes. An office worker, that seems to need you more than your spouse, can appeal to your pride and then when temptation leads to actions that are evil, lives and relationships are ruined often beyond repair. How could it have seemed so desirable and have such terrible outcomes? We must remember that we are “wrestling” with more than simple temptations. The Apostle Paul tells us... *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJ)*

When we let our eyes, our flesh, and our pride take over our lives we place ourselves in a dangerous place spiritually. We can, if we are not careful, blame our failures on God. Why does He allow me to face these temptations? Why doesn't He just take them away? The letter of James clarifies for us how temptation really works. *¹³ 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. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. (James 1:13-16 NKJ)

James tells us in this passage that while temptations come, to become its victim lies with our own desires leading us to follow the enticement into sin.

The appeal of temptation usually begins with the lust of the eye. Whatever the enticement, we begin to “see” it as desirable. The next step in the process is to allow our flesh to desire that which is before us, and then, our pride causes us to take the next step leading to our indulgence in the sin and the consequences that often follow close behind. The writer of Hebrews describes Moses' choice to identify with God's people when he says... *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, (Hebrews 11:24-26 NKJ)* He points out that sin always offers pleasure as its enticement but that it is a deception to believe that it will be lasting.

Pleasure, when pursued, always leads one to seek newer and more intense sources of fleshly experience. Do not be deceived, though temptations seem to be attractive they hide consequences that are clearly destructive. What, at first, seems to be so attractive that it almost seems to have no negatives attached can easily convince us that it won't hurt to indulge just a little. We cannot see the “downside” because our flesh draws us into the trap. It seems too good to be bad.

Let's consider a case in point. Puppies and kittens are irresistibly cute, but they do not remain as puppies and kittens. They become dogs and cats, demand more attention, cost more to feed, and they can even become burdens that are anything but cute, and have you seen the cost of their health care? In a similar fashion temptation often appears highly desirable at first, but can grow to be an undesirable burden. Many are those who thought that having a drink with friends would not be a problem. “After all, I'm just being sociable.” Sadly, when alcohol-dulled thinking leads to inappropriate behavior, it is too late to avoid the consequences that follow. Better to seek your fellowship without the temptations. Remember the enemy seeks to destroy lives and his first line of attack is the temptation. Let's walk in Christ and rely on Him to keep us safe from the temptations that destroy. **Pastor Doug**