

Promises

For

Now And Evermore

Promise for Overcoming Temptation

Steve Flatt

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"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1

Corinthians 10:13)

How's that for a great promise? I'm not sure offhand if I can think of a better promise anywhere in the entire Bible. It's the most universal promise I know because everyone of us is tempted, aren't we?

Let's think about temptation for a moment before we really delve into that promise and all that it means. Mark Anthony, the famous philosopher, scholar, warrior, and statesman, the one who was the suitor of Cleopatra, a man who was almost without "peer" in history. His tutor once said, "O Marcus, O colossal child, able to conquer the world, but unable to resist the temptation." I have a feeling that assessment doesn't only describe Mark Anthony, how about you?

Temptations are certain - The first thing we can say without any doubt is that temptations are certain. A temptation is a trap that's set before you by Satan. It's his lure to get you to sin.

We usually think of temptations as very negative things, because they lead us to that which is our destruction. But quite frankly, temptations are almost always packaged very, very attractively.

Do you know the difference between a trial and a temptation?

James, the half brother of Jesus, makes that clear. He says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." (James 1:2-3) Therefore, a test (trial) is that which is allowed upon you or even sent upon you by God for your character development.

But in that same chapter down at verse 13, James says "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone."

You see temptations are sent by Satan for your devastation. Tests are sent by God for our development. Temptations are by designed for our devastation. As long as the devil's around, there will be temptations. You know the old adage that there are two certainties, death and taxes, right? Well, there really is at least one more. There will always be temptation. No one is exempt, not the young, not the old, not the educated, not the uneducated, not male, not female, not black and not white. I don't care how many years or how closely you've walked with God you will not be immune from temptation. In fact let's debunk that myth right now.

There are a lot of people who believe the more spiritual you are the more you will begin to vindicate and abstain yourself from temptations. It's not true.

Look at the children of Israel, God's chosen people back in the days of the Exodus when Moses led them out. Look at the spiritual privileges and blessings that they had.

Paul says in verse one, "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the

sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Do you see all the advantages they had? They had the cloud, they followed it. They had the food from God. They drank the water given to them by God. Paul said Christ himself was accompanying them. "Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert." (vs. 5) That's one of the great understatements in the Bible. God was only pleased with two of them out of about two million. Why? They fell victim to temptation. Temptations are certain.

Temptations are common – Though they come in different guises, Satan uses the same basic ploys on all of us.

We're told some of the temptations that the children of Israel kept falling victim to. “Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry’.” (vs. 7) Now idolatry is simply putting something in God's place, giving some object his preeminence and his status. It's true today as much as it was in the days of the Israelites. It flourished in Paul's day. It's a common temptation.

He said they fell victim to sexual immorality. Not much has changed, has it? It's a common temptation. (vs.8)

"We should not test the Lord, as some of them did" (vs. 9) It's the idea of trying to put God on the spot, playing games with him, testing his patience and taking liberties with his mercies. The children of Israel did that and oh so many people do that now.

“Do not grumble, as some of them did - and were killed by the destroying angel.” (vs. 10) That may be the greatest temptation facing believers then and now. What I'm trying to get you to see is, every temptation that Paul cited among the Israelites was present in his day 1,600 years later, and those same temptations are present right now 1,900 years after Paul. Idolatry, immorality, arrogance, discontentment; you boil it down and we, humanity, share the same basic temptations. Nothing has changed.

The Apostle John says in 1 John 2:16 that you can take all the temptations and the sins they lead to, and group them into one of three categories: (1) lust of the flesh, (2) lust of the eyes and (3) pride of life. But "No temptation has seized you (listen) except what is common to man." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Common pattern - James tells us the pattern. "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." (1 John 1:14) The Greek word that's used there for enticed is a fishing term. It doesn't take much imagination to see the principle does it? I'm not a very good fisherman, but I understand the concept.

You take a hook, but you don't just throw the hook in the water, do you? You've got to put something out there called bait, or we even call it a lure. That's an appropriate name. You see it has to be just the right one for a bass if you're going after a bass or just the right one for a trout if you're fishing for trout. When that thing hits the water, you make it attractive, and you pull on it and you twitch it and you get the attention. Until finally so caught up by their own desire for food, the fish hits it. James says that's exactly the way it is between Satan and us. Sure enough, the devil uses the same old bait on all of us, and he keeps reeling us in.

Temptations are crafty. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1 Corinthians 10:12) Oh be careful, temptations are so crafty. If you think you've got some kind of spiritual status, you're beyond all that now and you know your maturity level has taken you to a whole sphere where you don't worry about

falling into temptation. Bam! You're on your way down. In fact, we're told in the Bible that pride goes before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

The Pharisees caught themselves in that trap. They thought they were so obedient they were beyond sin and they didn't even recognize the fact that they were wallowing in it. You never climb too high, you never run too far. Be very, very careful about throwing stones at someone else who has fallen victim to temptation, because your time might be next. Now have I scared you enough about temptation? Surely I have. It's **certain**, it's **common** and it's **crafty**. But here is the best news, and this is our promise. Temptation is conquerable. It really is.

Temptation is conquerable - "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) That passage tells us several things.

1. Our God is faithful. He's not going to desert you when temptation surrounds you. He's not going to let you down. He's right there where He's always been and you can count on Him. You can count on Him to do what? You can count on Him to do things that are extremely important. He will keep that temptation within limits and boundaries. Now mark that down.
 - a. As strong as they seem at times, temptations are not limitless. They are bound by God's power. Remember they are orchestrated by Satan, they're not random. Temptations are like bait to a fish, luring us to sin. But remember that God is stronger, wiser, and ultimately going to defeat Satan. Nothing that Satan uses as a ploy against us escapes God's notice, nor does it supersede his power.
 - b. God knows the power of every temptation. He knows each person's limitations are different and the power of each and every temptation. He will not let the combination of those two things create an overload.
2. Temptation is conquerable. When I have fallen victim to temptation, and wanted to indict God for letting me fall, though it was my own choice, I go back and reread the conversation that Satan had with God Almighty the book of Job, where God said to Satan you can test my servant Job but you go this far and no farther. You see God knew exactly what he was doing. He has limits.

So temptation is conquerable, first of all, because:

1. God will keep temptation within limits.
2. God will provide a way of escape. That is the most magnificent part of the whole promise. When I find myself surrounded by temptation, if I'll just keep my eyes open, there's a way out right there. Sometimes I've had a hard time believing that because my eyes were so focused on the temptation. Have you ever fallen victim to that?

Think about the fish analogy that James uses again. Is the problem for that fish that it is in the water or is the fish being drawn to the lure by its desire for food? Is the problem that he doesn't have a way out? He's got every way in the world out. He's got a whole lake. He's got a whole ocean. He can take off and swim in a million different directions. That's not the problem. The problem is **his attention is absolutely obsessed with the bait**. The great news is there's a way of escape every time but one must focus on the escape, not the lure, the temptation.

Key defenses - What does the scripture teach us about defenses against temptation? You prepare yourself for those testing moments that Satan puts before you, don't walk in blindly, or naively.

1. Run from temptation. When you see a temptation that's sent straight from the devil, run from it, don't toy with it, don't flirt with it and don't entertain it. Just run! You're not going to be the first human being to try to whip the devil one on one. A lot of human beings have tried and nobody has ever whipped the devil one on one yet. Samson thought he was pretty strong, didn't he? He thought he was tough. He thought he could handle anything, but ask Delilah how weak he was.

Be like Joseph, who when Potiphar's wife grabbed him by the coat and said, "come and lie with me." You talk about fleeing from temptation, Joseph literally fled and left his coat right there in her hand.

2. Guard your thought life. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." As the fountain is, so will be the stream. Quench the spark and you stop the fire. Philippians 4:8 says, "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. The reason for that is simply this: temptation flourishes on inconsistent thinking.

In the book of James, right after he talked about the luring nature of temptations, like a bait before a fish, he says, "Don't be deceived my brothers." You see temptation is built upon the premise of deception. I've wondered how many fish have been caught out there in all those lakes. Once they're in that net and are being pulled into the boat, I wonder how many of them are thinking, I wish I hadn't swallowed that. I wonder how many people who swallowed the bait and thought as they were being reeled in, I wish I hadn't swallowed that. Eve did the same thing. How was she tempted? How did she fall? She was deceived. So guard your thought life. Don't be deceived.

3. Fall in love with the Lord. This is so critical, so fundamental. Fall in love with the Lord. Who you love, changes your desires, and desire is the key to temptation. You see it goes back to that lure. That's the key.

When I was growing up at home, my Mom wanted me along with my sisters to do the dishes. Now I'll be honest with you. I would try to find every excuse in the world not to do those dishes. Mom, you know it hurts my back because the sink is too low and all this. Then I started dating my wife-to-be. I would go over to her house and eat. After dinner, she'd say, "Hon, would you help me with the dishes?" I'd say, "Oh, I'd love to."

Now what's the difference? It has nothing to do with dishes. No. I had fallen in love with the one who wanted me to do the dishes. Now it's not that I didn't love my Mom. Oh, you understand, I don't have to go into all that. You see it's the same way, when you fall in love with Jesus, you'll find your heart more firmly set on the things that he desires instead upon the things that Satan desires. The key is having the right delight.

4. Pray. If you don't see the escape when temptation is all around you, and you don't remember the promise then Pray! Right then, right there. I don't care where you are, just drop that head, get down on your knees, and pray, because prayer may be your means of escape.

Abraham Lincoln once wrote, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." If you sense that you have nowhere else to go, go there and watch God give you that way out.

Prayer has a way of totally diluting until it destroys temptation. Amazing Grace Class #1162 - Steve Flatt, June 5, 1994

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