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# Temptation & Worship



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# Temptation and Worship

We are all too familiar with temptation: being drawn away of our lusts and enticed (*James 1:14*). When you are in temptation, do you feel near to worship? Most do not. Worship seems miles away. What if the opposite is true? What if when we are in the midst of temptation, worship is very near?

In the “*very good*” garden (*Genesis 1:31*) which God created and placed man, He planted a tree. The tree bore fruit which was not to be eaten. In so doing, a tension descended on Adam and Eve. The tension was the ever present decision between obedience and disobedience. This tension gave way to trials and temptations. The difference between a trial and temptation is subtle yet key. The difference lies in the intended use of the tension. The tension to prove one’s love and obedience to God is called a trial. On the contrary, the tension to prove one’s sin or evil within them is called a temptation. We read in the scriptures that God cannot be tempted nor does He tempt any man (*James 1:13*). His trials are meant to glorify Him and benefit us. Satan, on the other hand, plays to this tension, and, through a desire to prove us disobedient, he tempts us. Adam had the choice to eat from the forbidden fruit. The “*very good*” status of the garden was tied to Adam’s agreement with God to partake that which God has said is good and abstain from that which God has said is not good. Sin resulted when Adam refused the good which God declared to eat and refused the good of the abstinence God required. Therefore, the seed of sin is the rejected belief that God is good. This fundamental concept is faith.

At the heart of God’s created tension, the core question being asked is “Do you agree God is good?” Eve faced this question in that moment of temptation. Satan played to the tension of the fruit using deceptive, persuasive logic to entice her to disobey God’s commands. Central to this logic was the question – “Is God good?” “Do you agree with God?” Eve answered “no” to these questions in the moment she ate the fruit. Adam said “no” to these questions the moment he ate the fruit. We answer “no” to these questions every time we yield to Satan’s temptations. When a man lusts after a woman he has said, “I don’t believe God is good and has my best interest in mind when He says I should not look at a woman to lust after her”. Consider another example: when a man boasts about himself he has, in a sense, said “I do not agree with God that I should esteem others higher than myself”. When all the layers are stripped away we find faithlessness to what God deems best and good at the core of our sin.

This should come as no surprise. Faith is central to our salvation. Faith is the cause of our good works (*Rom 1:5*). Faith is the seed by which obedience sprouts. “*Faith without works is dead*” *James 2:17* declares. Our works make manifest our faith. Saying “no” to what God says “no” about shows evidence of our agreement with His goodness. Saying “yes” to what God says “yes” about shows evidence of our agreement with His goodness. It follows directly that God is worshiped through acts of faith. The tension that temptation plays on is a catalyst for this deep expression of faith. When we turn from temptation, we are saying “I agree with God. He is good.”

The nagging choice between obedience and disobedience is not to be shunned. The nagging choice is necessary for us to prove our agreement with God’s goodness. Furthermore, the more nagging the choice, the more agreement can be proved. I will show my faith (agreement with God’s goodness) most keenly in my greatest area of temptation. For example, Sam does not struggle with gambling. He has no problem walking by a casino without temptation. Since he is not tempted by gambling, it is not in this area that he most exhibits his agreement with God’s goodness. However, if you choose an area of sinful struggle, the opposite becomes true. Suppose Sam is greatly tempted to misrepresent his earnings to the IRS to lessen his tax burden. This tendency for greed is the “*thorn in his flesh*” (*2 Cor. 12:9*) whereby his refusal to indulge will most demonstrate his faith in God’s goodness. Obedience on this issue will require a suffering of the flesh (*1 Peter 4:1, 2*).

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This gives us a helpful lens through which we can view our weaknesses. Many men are exasperated and ask “why am I thus?” Why do I struggle with envy? Porn? Greed? Addiction? Anger? Sin originates in the heart (*Matt 15*). We are fallen (*Rom 5*). When we accept this reality, we can find resolve in the choice it provides; the opportunity to worship God by agreeing with His goodness in obedience and thereby prove our faith. The greater the temptation, the greater the faith, and thus, the deeper the worship.

The worship that comes from obedience is “deep” because it is completely void of self. In our moments of temptation when we feel dreadfully alone, we have to deny all of our senses in order to obey. We do not recognize our obedience as worship because it is void of all the usual feelings that accompany customary, usual worship. Worship that springs from temptation is not accompanied with joy, happiness and fellowship. Such attributes are present when we worship through song but not willful obedience. Worshipping with our feet or actions is worshipping with our faith. Worshipping with our actions is desired by God.

All of the above provides a bit of clarity in how a believer can live out their faith. The good news contained herein is immense. When we do not understand this principle of worshipping with our actions, we fall into sin easier and remain in sin longer. Easier because we believe we are alone in that moment of dark temptation and have no way out but to continue on toward sin. We can remain in sin longer because we believe that if I’ve done it once, I may as well do it again. These two lies have ensnared many Christians. Bouts of sin have enslaved Christian men and women because they feel hypocritical for weeks and months waiting for some undefined time to pass before they feel like they can truly worship. The reality is, one can worship now. And the sooner you do, the healthier you will be. In summary, consider these three points concerning temptation:

1. Temptation is not sin (*Mark 1:13*). Therefore, I am not separated from God when I am being tempted. Separation follows sin.
2. Temptation brings worship near (*James 1:12*). Therefore, my most trying day can be my most worshipful.
3. No temptation is more than we can bear (*1 Cor. 10:13*). Therefore, every temptation is under the sovereign hand of God. By His power, He wishes to trump Satan’s temptation and turn it into a trial which proves our faith in His goodness. (*1 Peter 1: 6,7*)