

Temptation.

Someone once said, "You needn't worry about avoiding temptation after you pass sixty years of age, that's when it starts avoiding you!" That's far from the truth. Temptation is a fact of life and part of the Christians warfare. We will face temptation until our dying day. It's been rightly said that the only Christians without temptation are dead ones! Temptation isn't sin. You may be troubled today because of wrong thoughts and wrong inclinations. The Devil suggests to you, "How can you be a real Christian when you think like that?" Temptation is only sin when it is given in to. Remember Jesus Christ was sinless, yet we read this about him in Hebrews 4:15, "We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet without sin". If temptation itself were sin then Jesus would have been sinful. A wrong thought or inclination entertained is sin. Playing with the temptation in your mind is sin. Putting it into action is sin.

Temptation comes to us in three ways. We read in 1John 2:16, "For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-comes not from the Father but from the world". The Devil tempted Jesus in all three areas. We read about this in Matthew chapter four. Jesus was tempted to fulfil his cravings. In Matthew 4:3 the Devil says, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread". In other words satisfy your own personal cravings at the expense of obedience to God the Father. Satan tempts us in the same way. He suggests that we throw off the restraints of God's law. He tempts you to do your own thing, and to live for yourself. He encourages us to eat drink and be merry, and to be promiscuous, and to get high on drugs. Jesus was tempted to arrogantly demonstrate who he was to the world. Jesus was taken to the highest point of the Temple. The Devil says in verse 5, "If you are the Son of God throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands". In other words take pride in your position as the Son of God. Satan tempts us to seek position and influence in life above seeking God's will and pleasure. Jesus' third temptation was the lust of the eyes. We read in verse 8, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. `All this will I give you`, he said, `if you will bow down and worship me". Satan appeals to what you can see. He tempts us to pursue the

passing visible things of this life, at the expense of the more important spiritual and invisible blessings we can enjoy in knowing Jesus. Don't forget that Jesus has promised to meet our daily material needs when we put him and his kingdom first in our lives. We don't need to be anxious about that.

There are also three enemies that work against us as we seek to do God's will and live for him. These are key influences in temptation. The first is the world. We read in 1John 2:15, "Do not love the world or anything in the world". The world is this fallen world system that works against God and his people. We face worldly temptations daily. You know when a thing is worldly because it doesn't promote righteousness. It leads you away from God. It weakens your love and devotion to Christ. The second influence is the flesh, or the sinful nature. We read in Romans 8:5, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires". Our sinful nature is the traitor within. When an appealing temptation comes along from the devil our sinful nature wants to follow it. To be godly means we have to say no to the appetite of the sinful nature. The third influence is the devil. We read in 1Peter 5:8, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour". Satan tempts you to bring you down. He wants you ineffective for Christ. He'll use all his skill to oppose your progress in the things of God. God permits temptation in your life to test your faith and your resolve to please him. Through it God builds you up. Let me share with you some foolproof ways of dealing with temptation. Read your Bible daily. We read in Psalm 119:11, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you". William Plummer once said, "Weak doctrines will not be a match for powerful temptations". Spend time in prayer. Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation". It's less likely that you will fall into temptation after falling before God in prayer. Be aware of your weakness. We read in Hebrews 12:1, "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that easily entangles us". Identify that sin that ensnares you so quickly and fight it every time it appears.

Christian fellowship will help you in your fight with temptation. Get amongst Christians. They will encourage you. We read in Hebrews 10:24-25, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one

another". Is it your habit to meet together with other believers? Do you support each other in your trials and temptations when you do?

Resisting the devil is vital in times of temptation. We read in 1Peter 5:9, "Resist him standing firm in the faith". You must make your stand and say no to his temptations. We read in James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". You resist the devil by using the Bible against him. That's what Jesus did in the wilderness. He said three times in Matthew 4, "It is written". In his great hymn, "A safe stronghold our God is still", Martin Luther said this about the devil, at the end of the third verse, "Look grim as e`er he will, he harms us not a whit; for why? His doom is writ; a word shall quickly slay him".

You must avoid temptation. You mustn't walk into its path. Paul said to Timothy in 1Timothy 6:11, "But you, man of God, flee from all this". In the book of Genesis Potiphar`s wife tried to seduce Joseph. We read in Genesis 39:12, "He left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house".

You must be careful what you allow into your mind if you're going to avoid temptation. Philippians 4:8 tells us the best way to employ our minds. We read, "Whatever is true noble right pure lovely admirable excellent or praiseworthy think about such things". No ungodly temptation will find room in a mind filled with godly thoughts.

Keep your eyes on Jesus. Follow his example, and live as he did. He was tempted regularly but never gave in. Look forward to his coming. This will motivate you from yielding to temptation. We read in 2 Peter 3:11, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God". You'll overcome temptation when you live in the light of the coming of the Lord.