

## The Place of Temptation

Temptation is a very misunderstood area of our lives. We have gotten the impression that temptation is bad, so we want to have nothing to do with it, and if we do struggle with it, we don't want anybody to know about it. However, temptation, itself, is not good *or* bad. It is simply an aspect of life. It is our *response* to temptation that is good or bad.

We cannot go through this life avoiding all temptation. It is an impossible goal. As we shall see in this article, God, Himself, will see to it that we have some exposure to temptation. It is important that we put temptation into a proper perspective so that the purposes of God can be achieved in our lives.

### Condition of the Heart

We don't know our own heart; we think we do, but we don't. The scriptures tell us this very plainly.

Jeremiah 17:9 NASB

(9) "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

Our hearts are tricky, "more deceitful than all else". That is why we can be led astray by the things in our heart. Our hearts deceive us. But, the Lord is good to us. He searches our hearts and puts them to the test.

Jeremiah 17:10 NASB

(10) "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds."

Since the Lord knows our hearts and we don't, He provides us with opportunities that expose our hearts so that its deceitfulness can be revealed. We have the children of Israel as one of our examples for this. The Lord tells them why He led them in the wilderness and the same reasons apply to us also.

### Purpose of the Wilderness

It was only about a two week journey from Egypt to Canaan if the route taken would have been the normal caravan route. However, God, who directly led them, did not lead them in that way, but, instead, led them by way of the wilderness. Since God doesn't do things by accident, the journey then was important to the purposes of God.

Deuteronomy 8:2 NASB

(2) "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."

The Lord gives three reasons: 1) to humble them, 2) to test them, 3) to know what was in their heart with the outcome, or result, being whether or not they would keep His commandments.

Understand that God already knew their hearts, He knew whether or not they would keep His commandments. That is part of the fore-knowledge of God. The ones that didn't know these things were the children of Israel. The wilderness humbled and tested them revealing their hearts to them, which gave them the choice then of obeying His commandments or not.

The next verse tell us that God did this *“that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”* Our hearts don't consider anything more important than what we want. God has to teach us the importance of His words and that His words override the desires of the heart.

In the verses above, we see God's purpose for the wilderness at it relates to the children of Israel. Later, in verse 16, God gives us His goal: *“that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.”* His objective was to do them good in the end. He could not accomplish this goal until He exposed the condition of their hearts to them so that they might change.

We are in the same place with the same problems that the children of Israel had. They were called out of Egypt in order to go into and possess the land of promise. While theirs was a physical journey to a physical, geographical, location, ours is a spiritual journey to a spiritual location—our land of promises, the Kingdom of God. We have been called out of the world so that we might enter and possess the Kingdom of God. This means that our hearts must be dealt with just as were the hearts of the children of Israel.

## To Do Us Good

God is no respecter of persons. We cannot bypass the processes of God that are designed to change us.

### Romans 8:27-28 NASB

(27) and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

(28) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

God wants to do us good at the end. He has called us, and because of that and the fact that He searches the hearts, He causes all things (this includes all of our circumstances) to work together to bring us to the place that He can do us good.

Will God lead us into circumstances that expose our hearts? Absolutely! He certainly did that for the children of Israel; He will certainly do it for us. We even have an example of this with Jesus.

## Jesus, Our Example

After being baptized by John, the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Jesus. Luke tells us that as soon as Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

### Luke 4:1-2 NASB

- (1) Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness
- (2) for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.

In the original text the words for “led around by the Spirit” are very strong, even to the point that they could be translated as “driven by the Spirit”. The wilderness experience of Jesus was definitely at the direction and leading of God.

The purpose of Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness was so that He could be tempted by the devil. In other words, Jesus was “put to the test” just as the children of Israel were tested to expose their hearts. It is not by accident that each time that Jesus responded to a temptation from the devil, He quoted scriptures from Deuteronomy relating to the wilderness journey of the children of Israel.

### Luke 4:13 NASB

- (13) When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

When the temptations were over, the devil left Him. The outcome of the wilderness experience for Jesus is given in verse 14, “*And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit...*”.

Jesus' heart was exposed during the temptations and His heart was pure. Jesus refused to do anything *for Himself* (turn stones to bread); refused to do anything *of Himself* (jump off the pinnacle); refused to do anything *in Himself* (worship the enemy). Jesus passed the test because there was nothing in Him that **responded with desire** to the temptations. That is why He could say that the ruler of this world had come and had nothing in Him.

### John 14:30 NASB

- (30) "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

This is the process:

1. filled with the Holy Spirit;
2. led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit;
3. tempted (put to the test) by the devil;
4. overcoming temptation with the word;
5. passing the test with a pure heart;
6. returning in the power of the Spirit.

**Between** “being filled with the Spirit” and the “power of the Spirit” is the **place of temptation**.

## Application to Us

After looking at the example of the children of Israel and at the example of Jesus, let us look at how this applies to us and our walk with the Lord.

First, we need to establish the methodology of how God puts us to the test. Remember the test is to reveal our hearts to us because there are many hidden things in our hearts that are hindrances to our being able to accomplish our destiny in the Lord. The tests are the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It is not the temptation itself, because God does not tempt us.

### James 1:13 NASB

(13) Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

God doesn't tempt us; but, He will allow us to enter circumstances where the devil can present things to us that can become temptations because of what is in our heart.

### James 1:14-15 NASB

(14) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

(15) Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

The scriptures above show us the place of temptation. Lust is in our heart. It is enticed by what the enemy presents in our circumstances. The lust then joins with the temptation presented, conceives and births sin and when sin is full-grown, it brings forth death. The original language is a picture of conception—sperm meets egg and conceives.

The place of temptation is in our heart. It is there that sin is conceived. That is why Jesus could be tempted but not sin. There was nothing in His heart that responded with lust for the object of the temptation.

When we respond with lust to temptation, our enemy takes advantage of that, considering it a legal right on his part to have access to our lives. Paul warns us of this when he was discussing forgiveness and unforgiveness.

### 2 Corinthians 2:11 NASB

(11) so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

The word in the original concerning taking advantage means "to take more than you have a right to". That is part of the devil's schemes. Once he has a legal opening, he will take more than he has a right to take.

On our part, we need to remove anything in our heart that is open to temptation. The lusts of our heart are like handles which the enemy can grab and toss us about any time that he wants to. How can we

walk with the Lord and fulfill our calling if we are open to the enemy in this way?

Do we really want the power of the Spirit? Then, we have to walk through the temptation process described above, overcoming temptation with the Word of God.

We need to face our circumstances head on. We don't run from temptation—we remove everything from our heart that **responds** to temptation.

Brethren, it is time that we pass when we are put to the test.