

# THE WAY TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION

## JAMES 04:07–10

### *Introduction*

Temptation is the constant experience of man. Temptation comes and then comes sin. Every sin is preceded by temptation. Therefore, if we can figure out how to overcome temptation, we can wipe sin off the face of the earth. Imagine a world without sin — without war, murder, assault, divorce, immorality, hatred, anger, arrogance, haughtiness, neglect and on and on we could go. Imagine a world where all sin was eradicated. The answer to conquering sin is to conquer the temptation. Deal with the cause, not the result. How can we overcome and conquer temptation? This is the discussion of this passage. We must do four things.

- I. Step 1: submit to God — resist the devil (v. 7).
- II. Step 2: draw near to God and repent (v. 8).
- III. Step 3: be disciplined and deeply, mournfully concerned (v. 9).
- IV. Step 4: humble yourself (v. 10).

### ***I. James 04:07 Submit Yourself to God and Resist the Devil***

How can we overcome temptation? Step one — submit yourself to God and resist the devil.

=> The word “submit” (hupotagete) means to put yourself under God, under His care, power and strength; to yield to God, to His will, command, instructions, laws, behaviour and Word; to surrender yourself to God for Him to strengthen you so that you can do exactly what He says.

=> The word “resist” (antistete) means to take a stand against the devil; to exert the energy and effort to oppose and defeat the devil and his temptation; to keep your mind and energy focused upon counteracting and conquering the temptation of the devil.

Both of these words are military words; therefore, they are urgent and they are imperatives. They are from our military commander, God Himself. When temptation strikes, submit yourself to God. Do exactly what your military commander says. He has the overall plan and all the armament and fire power at His disposal. His grace and power can defeat the enemy.

Submit yourself to God and His Word of command. What this means is to focus your mind upon God and His Word *immediately when temptation strikes*. Turn away from the temptation, push it out of your mind and begin to think about God and go over and over His Word in your mind. Just begin to resist the devil by focusing your mind upon God and His Word. Persevere in following God’s command and in resisting the devil. When you do, the most wonderful thing will happen. The devil will flee and the temptation will be gone. Remember: this is exactly what Christ did (cp. Lk. 4:4, 8, 12).

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Now, note the critical point: we must both surrender to God and *resist the devil*. Both acts are required. When the devil or temptation confronts us, we can never defeat him and his hoards of evil...

- by standing and fighting alone
- by going our own way
- by giving in a little
- by refusing to listen to our Commander's Word.

We cannot even listen to the enemy's tempting offer — not even for a moment. Picturing the temptation moves us a long way down the road to defecting and sinning against God. The only way to conquer temptation is to immediately submit ourselves to God and to immediately resist the devil and his temptation. We may have to struggle. The images of the temptation may attack and attack us, but if we will attack back by rolling God's Word over and over in our minds, the temptation will flee.

**Thought 1.** God's instructions about how to overcome temptation work. Even if one has been enslaved by some sin for years, submitting to God and resisting the devil will cause the devil and temptation to flee. But note this: if a person has been enslaved by the sin — drugs, alcohol, illicit sex, smoking, pornography, overeating or whatever — the temptation will continue to attack him for days and perhaps weeks and months. But the believer must remember something: he is now in the army of God. He is now a soldier under the command of God. Therefore, every time the enemy attacks, the believer is to submit himself to God and His Word, and he is to resist the devil. He is to persevere and keep on persevering — to submit to God and resist the devil and to keep on submitting to God and resisting the devil — and he will discover a most wonderful thing. As time passes — days, weeks or months — the devil and temptation will flee farther and farther away and attack fewer and fewer times. The believer will walk in more and more victory over the devil and his evil. The believer will never be completely without temptation, but he will walk through life more and more victoriously, triumphing more and more over all evil.

**Eph 4:26-27** *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*

**James 4:7** *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

**1 Pet 5:8** *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

**Mat 6:10** *"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

**Mat 26:39** *Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

**Luke 1:38** *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.*

**Rom 6:13** *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

**Psa 143:10** *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*

**Eph 6:13** *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

**2 Pet 3:17** *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

**Prov 1:10** *My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.*

**Prov 4:14** *Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.*

### JAMES 04:07

#### BELIEVER'S VICTORY OVER SATAN AND TEMPTATION

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

**James 4:07**

The believer is to resist the devil. He is to overcome the *evil one*. But how?

=> By asking God and praying, "Deliver us from the evil one."

**Mat 6:13** *"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

=> By quoting Scripture, fasting and praying.

**Mat 4:3-4** *The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

**Mat 4:6-7** *"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

**Mat 4:9-10** *"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

=> By ministering in Jesus' name.

**Luke 10:17** *The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*

=> By special sessions of prayer.

**Luke 22:31-32** “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

=> By invoking, that is, claiming, the name and power of the God of peace.

**Rom 16:20** *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

=> By forgiving others.

**2 Cor 2:10-11** *If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

=> By not giving a foothold to the devil.

**Eph 4:27** *And do not give the devil a foothold.*

**Eph 6:10-11** *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (cp. v. 12-18)*

=> By repenting and acknowledging the truth.

**2 Tim 2:25-26** *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (Acts 13:10)*

**James 4:7** *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (1 Pet. 5:8-9)*

=> By being born again.

**1 John 5:18** *We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.*

=> By not fearing and by being faithful.

**Rev 2:10-11** *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death. □*

## **II. James 04:08 Come Near to God and Repent**

How can we overcome temptation? Step two — draw near to God and repent. This is the greatest privilege in all the world: to have the glorious privilege to approach and draw near God, the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the Creator and Lord of the universe.

Just think, believers can approach God and talk and share with Him anytime, any-place. The door into God's presence is never closed. But note what Scripture teaches: the door into God's presence is not only open, but we are *strongly urged and encouraged* to come near to God. This verse is again a strong imperative: "Come near to God." The temptation strikes; it is immediate, unexpected, fierce. What can we do? What is our hope? God — come near to God. The idea is more than just submitting to God, much more. *Coming near* means to come right beside, to get as close as possible to God. Get right next to Him. Begin to talk and share with Him. How do we do this?

=> By reading the Word of God, the Holy Bible or if we do not have access to God's Word when the temptation strikes, by reviewing verses of Scripture over and over in our minds.

=> By prayer — by asking God for strength and power, mercy and grace. But note: the prayer should be positive, focusing upon God and His strength and Word, not upon the temptation. Keep your mind off the temptation and upon God.

Focus upon God and God alone. Get close to God. Draw as near as possible to Him and note the glorious promise: God will come near you. He will come near and embrace you and strengthen you and deliver you. This is exactly what God promises.

*1 Cor 10:13* 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..

*Heb 2:18* Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

*Heb 4:15-16* For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

*Psa 28:7* The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.

*Psa 40: 17* Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.

*Psa 73:28* But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

*Isa 41:10* So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

However, note that coming near to God is conditional. There is a person who God does not allow to come near Him. Who? The person with unclean, sinful hands and an impure, wavering heart. A person must do two things before he can come near to God.

1. The person must clean his hands. Some had unclean, sinful hands and James pulled no punches. He called them just what they were: *sinners*. If any of us have unclean hands — if we have touched what God forbids us to touch — we have not only sinned, but we are *sinners*. A terrible title to have attached to our names. Nevertheless, Scripture says that a person who touches when God says not to touch is a *sinner*.

The point is this: our hands must be cleansed of sin before we can approach and come near to God. God will not respond — He will not come near a person unless his hands are cleansed of sin.

*Isa 1:16 Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong.*

*Jer 4:14 O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbour wicked thoughts?*

*Acts 22:16 'And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'*

*2 Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

*2 Tim 2:21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

*1 John 3:3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

2. The person must purify his heart and quit wavering between God and temptation. A person cannot have a divided loyalty between God and the world. God does not allow a divided loyalty. God demands total allegiance or nothing. A person who is double-minded, who tries to follow God some of the time and the world at other times, cannot come near to God. God does not accept him nor come near to him. A person must purify his heart, turn his heart completely and totally over to the Lord Jesus Christ. A pure heart — a heart totally committed and loyal to Jesus Christ — is the only heart that God will accept and come near.

The point is this: a person cannot come near to God, he cannot get close to God, unless he has clean hands and a pure heart, a heart totally committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, a person must repent, turn away from all sin and draw near to God. If he will, then God will come near to him and make Himself available to the person at all times.

**Thought 1.** The believer who has the right to come near to God is the believer who walks in open fellowship and communion with God; who keeps his hands clean and his heart pure; who walks in prayer all day long, confessing and keeping himself pure. This is the believer whom God loves and to whom God is always coming near. This is the believer who is always fellowshiping and communing with God and who

walks in triumph over temptation. The believer who is always coming near to God is the believer who is the victor over the temptations and trials of life. He is God's great victor, the one whom God loves ever so much.

**Mat 5:8** *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."*

**Luke 9:62** *Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*

**Luke 16:13** *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

**1 Cor 10:21** *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.*

**1 Tim 1:5** *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

**Heb 10:22** *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

**James 1:8** *He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

**James 4:8** *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

**1 Pet 1:22** *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

**Hosea 10:2** *Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones.*

### **III. James 04:09 Be Disciplined and Deeply Concerned**

How can we overcome temptation? Step three — be enduring, and deeply and mournfully concerned. Note how descriptive this verse is:

**James 4:9** *Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.*

The word for "grieve" (talaiporesate) means to be grievous, to grievously endure toils (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 53); to discipline and to voluntarily abstain (William Barclay. *The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 127). The picture is this: when temptation strikes us, it is not time...

- to be laughing
- to be jolly
- to be joking around
- to be teasing
- to be light-hearted
- to be unconcerned
- to be complacent
- to be comfortable
- to be at ease

Temptation is grievous; therefore, it is time to be disciplined and to control the comforts and joys of life. Temptation is a time for rigorous warfare — for battle and the discipline and endurance of battle.

In fact, note this: the strife of temptation is usually immediate and unexpected. Therefore, we must immediately drop whatever we are doing — immediately stop the laughter and the comforts or joy of the moment — and focus upon getting near God. Our hearts must mourn and weep under the heaviness of the temptation and its attack, mourn and weep before God, asking and begging for strength and deliverance, ask and beg lest we disappoint and cut the heart of Christ. When we take the temptation this seriously, God will hear our cry and deliver and save us.

#### **IV. *James 04:10 Humility***

How can we overcome temptation? Step four — humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. God sees us at all times, even when we are tempted. Therefore, when we are tempted...

- God must not see us continuing on in our activity and comfort, laughter and joy of the moment. God must see us coming near to Him and mourning and crying for deliverance.
- God must not see a self-sufficient spirit, a spirit that overlooks calling upon Him. God must not see a spirit that ignores His Word, a spirit that faces the temptation on its own, ignoring and not even thinking about God and His Word and strength. God must see us humbly coming into His presence, calling and depending upon Him for strength and wisdom to overcome the temptation.
- God must not see us looking at the temptation and picturing how attractive and enticing it is. He must not see us revelling in the thoughts of the temptation and in picturing how nice it would be. God must not see us dallying around, thinking and picturing the attractiveness of any temptation — be it the taste of a second helping of food or a second look at an attractive man or woman or any other enticing attraction. God must see us “demolishing arguments [or imaginations] ...and taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Imagine! Every thought is to be captured and made obedient to Christ. Just think what *this* does to so much television, reading, and loose moments of wandering thoughts and undisciplined daydreaming. We must always remember that the spiritual warfare is fought in the spirit and mind, at the very core of the heart and mind. We must commit our hearts and minds to *focus totally* upon Christ and things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Ph. 4:8). We must struggle to subject every thought to Christ, to gain an unbroken communion and fellowship with Him. It will take years even for the best of us to gain such commitment and discipline of spirit and mind, but it can be done and must be done — by the Spirit of God for the



sake of Christ Jesus our Lord. This unbroken communion and fellowship with Christ is what God is after. It is the very reason He created us and has now saved us.

The point is this: when a person is tempted, if he humbles himself in the sight of God, God will lift him up. God will meet his need, give him whatever he needs, and deliver him from the onslaught of temptation.

**Thought 1.** William Barclay has an excellent description of this point.

*“Only when a man realizes his own ignorance can he ask the guidance of God. Only when a man realizes his own poverty in the things that matter will he pray for the riches of God’s grace. Only when a man realizes his weakness in necessary things will he come to draw upon his strength of God. Only when a man realizes that he cannot cope with life by himself will he kneel before the Lord of all good life. Only when a man realizes his own sin will he realize his need of a Saviour and of the forgiveness of God” (The Letters of James and Peter, p. 129).*

**Luke 14:11** *“For everyone who exalts himself will be bumped, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

**James 4:6** *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

**Rom 12:3** *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

**Phil 2:4-5** *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

**James 4:10** *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

**1 Pet 5:5** *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

**Psa 138:6** *Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.*

**Isa 66:2** *“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the Lord. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.” ■*