

THE CAUSES OF TEMPTATION AND WRONGDOING

JAMES 04:01–06

Introduction

As human being, we are always facing temptations and trials, and all too often we find ourselves yielding and doing wrong. This passage begins a new division in the Book of James, the all-important discussion on temptations and trials and how to conquer them. But before we can conquer them, we must understand what causes them. Just what is it that causes temptation and wrongdoing? This passage says that the causes are fourfold.

- I. Lust, evil desires: the passion for pleasure and gratification that rages within the body (v. 1).
- II. Distrust: seeking something and never trusting God or asking God for it (v. 2).
- III. Praying amiss: praying with the wrong motive (v. 3).
- IV. Worldliness: friendship with the world (v. 4).
- V. Conclusion: the cure (vv. 5-6).

I. *James 04:01 Lust, Evil Desires*

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? First, it is lust, evil desires — the passion for pleasure and gratification that rages within us. The words “lust” or “evil desires” (hedonon) mean to crave pleasure; to crave gratification. This Scripture says that desires for pleasure and gratification fight within our bodies. The picture is that of constant warfare, of our bodies’ craving, yearning, pulling, urging and grasping after whatever will satisfy our desires. The battle of wanting and desiring rages on and on within our bodies. Every person knows what it is to experience this warfare, to have his flesh (sinful nature) continually yearning after something. Desires or cravings are strong and difficult to control. In fact, few people control them completely. Some people may curb their desires in what are called the gross and visible sins such as vengeance and murder, but they gratify their desires in the so-called “acceptable” or less visible things such as overeating and selfishness, in buying and hoarding more than what is needed, and in looking when they should not look.

The point is this: man is a walking civil war; desires and lusts wage a battle within him, constantly seeking gratification and pleasure. Man wants to lift the restraint, to abandon inhibitions and enjoy the pleasure of the evil indulgence. It may be the lust for...

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| • more and more food | • more alcoholic beverages | • more illegal drugs |
| • unhealthy or illicit sex | • more possessions | • more money |
| • more property | • more recognition | • more popularity |
| • more authority | • more vengeance | |
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As stated, our desires or lusts wage a war within us, seeking endless pleasure and gratification. Now note the result of our desires or lusts: it is fights and quarrels.

Remember: the greatest need that man has is for peace. (See note, pt. 3, Jas. 3:17-18.)

Just imagine what the world would be like if men lived in peace with each other and with God. There would be no restlessness or uneasiness within the human soul and no fights or quarrels between men. There would be no sin or evil committed against others — wife, husband, neighbour or anyone else — because all men would be at peace with God as well as with each other. The greatest need man has is for peace. Yet, when we look at the world, what we see is anything but peace.

=> Peace is not what exists between men, but fights and quarrels.

=> Peace is not what exists between men and God, because desires or lusts fight a war within men's bodies — desires or lusts that explode into evil and destructive behaviour.

Where do these fights and quarrels come from? What causes them? Unless we know, we can never deal with them or conquer them. Therefore, we must heed Scripture: they come from desires or lusts — the passion for pleasure and gratification that rages within the human body.

Thought 1. William Barclay quotes several of the great thinkers of past history who recognized this point, the point that lust and desire lie at the very root of man's problems. These are well worth our noting. (Each man's statements are stated in separate paragraphs for easier reading):

"The root cause of this unceasing and bitter conflict is nothing other than desire."

=> *"Philo points out that the Ten Commandments culminate in the forbidding of covetousness which is desire, for desire is the worst of all the passions of the soul. 'Is it not because of this passion that relations are broken, and this natural goodwill changed into desperate enmity? that great and populous countries are desolated by domestic dissensions? and land and sea filled with ever new disasters by naval battles and land campaigns? For the wars famous in tragedy...have all flowed from one source — desire either for money, or glory or pleasure. Over these things the human race goes mad.'"*

=> *"Lucian writes, 'All the evils which come upon man — revolutions and wars, stratagems and slaughters — spring from desire. All these things have as their fountain-head the desire for more.'"*

=> *"Plato writes, 'The sole cause of wars and revolutions and battles is nothing other than the body and its desires.'"*

=> *"Cicero writes, 'It is insatiable desires which overturn not only individual men, but whole families, and which even bring down the state. From desires there spring hatred, schisms, discords, seditions and wars.' Desire is at the root of all the evils which ruin life and which divide men.'"*

- => William Barclay himself says, “*The New Testament is clear that this overmastering desire for the pleasures of this world is always a threatening danger to the spiritual life. It is the cares and riches and pleasures of this life which combine to choke the good seed (Luke 8:14). A man can become a slave to lusts and pleasures, and, when he does, malice and envy and hatred enter into life*” (Titus 3:3).
- => “*The ultimate choice in life lies between pleasing oneself and pleasing God; and a world in which men’s first aim is to please themselves is a world which is a battleground of savagery and division*” (The Letters of James and Peter, p. 116).

JAMES 04:01–03 LUST, DESIRE

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. **James 04:01–03***

The word is used three times in verses 1-3. In verses 1 and 3 the word hedonon is used. It means out of your sinful, sensual pleasures. In verse 2 the word is epithumeite which means a yearning passion for (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 49). (See *Lust*, Jn. 8:44.)

Note that desire, lust, a yearning passion for is not always evil. In verse 5 the Spirit “*envies intensely.*” In Luke 22:15 Christ desires (yearns) to eat the Passover with the apostles. What is it that distinguishes a good desire from an evil desire? At least two major things.

1. Motive: if one desires the necessities of life, his desire is good. The necessities — food, clothing, shelter, love, care — are essential for the fullness of life. When a man seeks God for these things, God provides the necessities.
2. Greed: desiring food is good, but if one desires food to *spend it on his pleasures*, that is, he desires food and food and food, it is wrong passion. It becomes sinful, sensual pleasure. Desiring love is good, but if one desires love to *spend it on his pleasures*, that is, he desires love and love and love, it is wrong passion (1 Th. 4:5). □

II. *James 04:02 Distrust; Not Relying on God*

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? Second, it is distrust. The statement of this verse, “You do not have, because you do not ask God,” means that man does not trust God nor call upon God. He just does not know God in a personal way, know Him to the point that he can ask and call upon God to meet his needs. Man does not have this kind of meaningful trust in God. Man basically distrusts God.

1. First, note this: the word for lust or desire is a different word (want) than the word for lust or desire in verses one and three (see *Lust, Desire*, Jas. 4:1-3). The word in this verse means a yearning desire or passion. Sometimes the desire is good; sometimes it is bad. For example, to desire food is good, but to desire food and more food is bad. This is the very point of this verse.

Note: we do not have our desires met because we do not trust and depend upon God to fulfil our desires. There is nothing wrong with our basic desires; they are to be met. But they are to be met by our trusting and depending upon God, acknowledging Him as the Source and Provider of every good and perfect gift. It is when we ignore, neglect and deny God that our desires run loose and wild. It is when God is shoved aside that we begin to desire and desire to the point that we lie, steal, cheat, fight, kill and quarrel to gratify our desires and pleasures.

2. Second, note this: there are different levels of desires and lusts. Three levels are given in this verse.

=> You want something but do not get it.

=> You kill and covet, but cannot have what you want.

=> You quarrel and fight, but you do not have, because you do not ask God.

- a. Some desire and desire, and they do not have. They do little to fulfil their deepest desires. They think little, plan little, work little and do little beyond indulging the basic desires for comfort and ease. They have broader and deeper desires, but they are just unwilling to do what is necessary to fulfil these desires. And most tragic of all, they do not sincerely call upon God to help them in meeting any of their desires, not even the desires for the basic necessities of life. They desire and desire, but they do not have because of their own lack of initiative and because of their distrust in God.
- b. Some desire and desire so much that they lie, steal, cheat and kill to gratify and possess their desires. The desire may be to get such things as some person, position, recognition, land, power or anything else on this earth. But no matter what it is, and no matter how much of it is gotten and possessed, it does not satisfy the lust and desire. The lust and desire remain, and the person craves more and more of it. The person just cannot obtain what he is after even if he lies, steals, cheats and kills to get it.
- c. Others desire and desire so much that they are willing to fight and go to war to gratify their desires. They want something so much — some power, some land, some position, some vengeance — that they are willing to throw a whole company or nation of people into a fight or war in order to satisfy their desire and gratify their pleasure. Imagine wanting something so much that one will kill and destroy the life of another person and in the case of war, the lives of millions in order to get it.

Rom 1:21-32 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were*

darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Eph 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

James 4:2 *You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Prov 16:26 *The labourer's appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on.*

Prov 21:10 *The wicked man craves evil; his neighbour gets no mercy from him.*

3. Third, note this: desire is never satisfied apart from God. A person must trust and call upon God in order to have his desires fulfilled: “You do not have because you do not ask God.” There are three reasons why trusting and calling upon God are necessary for desires to be fulfilled.
 - a. Man's deepest and most restless craving is spiritual. God has made man a spiritual being, a being who is restless until his spirit is at peace with God. Man may deny, ignore, neglect and reject this fact; nevertheless, the denial of truth does not do away with the truth. God has made man a spiritual being, a being with a soul that craves for spiritual satisfaction:

=> Man craves for God, for the fellowship and communion, the care and security of His presence.

=> Man craves for life, for life that is both abundant and eternal.

=> Man craves for a perfect world.

Man desires these things; deep down within his soul he desires for spiritual satisfaction, and his spirit is restless — ever craving for more and more — until the spirit is satisfied with the knowledge of these things.

- b. Man's spiritual desires and cravings cannot be satisfied with physical and material things. Man's experience is this: there is that within man that lusts and craves for more and more. And as more and more is taken, the lust or desire does not diminish; it grows. It craves for still more and more. Man's cravings are never satisfied. They have to be controlled. If man feeds his cravings and continues to feed and feed them, he is eventually consumed by his lusts or desires. The problem is this: man misunderstands that for which his soul is craving. It is an inner craving, a spiritual craving that gnaws away at him. Thus, no physical thing can satisfy that spiritual craving. A physical thing is of the earth, physical; it is not of heaven, spiritual. The spiritual craving can only be satisfied by a spiritual thing, only by the Spirit of God. Physical things only leave man dissatisfied, unfilled, incomplete, still hungering and thirsting after pleasure and self-gratification. (See note, Jn. 4:13-14.) Why? Because it did not come from God. Throughout history men have desired everything imaginable, and they have used every method from arguing to war to get what they desire. Yet they have never been satisfied within. Why? Because what they desired was never sought from God and did not come from God.
- c. Man is not able to control his desires, not completely and not always. Man must have the presence and power of God to control all his lusts and desires. No matter what man may think and claim, history is clear evidence of the uncontrolled desires of men. In fact, any thinking and honest person can testify to his lack of control and discipline over desires and lust. We corrupt our minds, thoughts and bodies and we hurt, disrupt and destroy others by our uncontrolled desires and lust. It is our uncontrolled desires and lusts that are carrying everyone of us to the grave. The only escape — the only victory over the corruption of desires and lusts — is God. We must trust God and call upon God. We must consult with God about our desires and wants...
- talk with Him • ask His opinion
 - ask His will • ask if the desire is good or bad
 - ask if the need is a true need or simply the lust for pleasure or gratification

We must learn to commune and fellowship with God — to walk in Him, live and move in Him, seeking and asking His opinion, will and help every step of every day. This is what God wants from all of us, leaders and citizens alike, ministers and laymen alike — God wants to fellowship and commune with us. He wants our acknowledgement — our worship and honour and praise of Him as the Lord and Father of the universe. Fellowship and communion with God — trusting and calling

upon Him — is the only way we can ever fulfil the deepest and innermost desire or our hearts. And once the spiritual craving is satisfied, all the other desires of our lives will be fulfilled and controlled by the presence and power of God in our hearts. Prayerlessness — not knowing God and not praying to God — is the second cause of temptation and wrongdoing.

Rom 6:11-13 *“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 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.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Psa 31:19 *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

Psa 37:3 *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

Psa 37:5 *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:*

Psa 62:8 *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.*

Prov 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

Isa 26:3-4 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.*

III. James 04:03 *Praying Amiss, with Wrong Motive*

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? Third, it is praying amiss, praying with the wrong motive. *Amiss* simply means to pray wrongly, not to pray right; to pray with the wrong motive. Even when a person trusts God — knows and fellowships with Him

on a personal basis and wants God to help meet his needs — he can ask God for help in the wrong way. He can pray amiss, and when he prays amiss, God is unable to help him. What does it mean to pray amiss? What is a wrong prayer? Scripture tells us, and this is the reason our prayers are so often not answered: we ask for things so that we can gratify our lust and pleasure. We ask for the wrong reasons, with the wrong motives. We ask...

- for health to be more comfortable.
- for healing and a longer life to continue our comfortable lives.
- for money to have more.
- for success to be recognized.
- for position to hold authority.
- for the family to be blessed so that we can continue to enjoy their presence.

We ask this and so much more, all because we seek to gratify our own desires more and more. We seek God's blessings so that we can have more comfort, enjoyment, better food and clothes and be accepted and recognized more.

What is the right motive for prayer? How can we pray and know that God will give the desires of our heart? *By asking for the glory of God.* When a person wants something from God, he must want it so that he can glorify God. We must always remember that what God is after is communion and fellowship with us, for us to draw closer and closer to Him, learning more and more about Him and worshipping and serving Him more and more. This is the way God is glorified, by our walking closely to Him and honouring and praising His name. Therefore, if we want anything from God, we must want it so that we can glorify Him — so that we can draw closer to Him and make Him better known to others.

1. If a person wants health, life, strength or a strong testimony, it must be so that he can glorify God.

Mat 5:16 *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

2. If a person wants to bear fruit in his life and work, or in his church and upon his land, it must be so that he can glorify God.

John. 15:8 *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

Rom 15:6 *So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

3. If a person wants the basic necessities of life — food, clothing and shelter, or purpose, meaning and significance, or assurance, confidence and security — or if he wants more position, authority or money, it must be so that he can glorify God and the Lord Jesus Christ in his life and testimony.

Mat 6:31-33 “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

2 Th 1:11-12 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

1 Tim 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.

IV. James 04:04 Worldliness; Friendship with the World

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? Fourth, it is worldliness. James uses strong language. He calls them adulterous people. He means two things.

1. Being adulterous means that a person is guilty of spiritual adultery. Jesus Christ holds His relationship with us in the highest regard. Our relationship with Him is to be so close that it can be described only by the closeness and intimacy of marriage. In fact, our relationship with Christ can even be closer and more meaningful than marriage. We are to know, believe and understand Christ just as we are to know, believe and understand our husbands and wives. But with Christ there is far more of a bond and relationship than what we can have with each other as men and women of earth. Jesus Christ actually lives within our bodies in the person of the Holy Spirit. We are to live, move and have our being in Christ and He in us. This is the reason believers are called *the bride of Christ* (2 Cor .11:1-2; Eph. 5:24-28; Rev. 19:7; 21:9). The marriage relationship just comes the closest to describing the bond which Christ has with us.

The point is this: our bond with Christ is so close that when we turn away from Him to the world, it is like committing spiritual adultery. Spiritual adultery means that we turn away from God to the world — that we break our commitment to God and turn

to other things; that we follow after the things of the world instead of following after God, things such as...

- money • possessions • lands • houses • position
- power • cars • clothes • popularity • honour
- fame • recognition • girls • boys

The picture of spiritual adultery shows us just how meaningful God counts our relationship with Christ: it is a relationship of love, a bond of love that can be the closest bond in all the world. If we turn away from Christ to the world, it cuts His heart with the deepest of pain — a pain beyond description — for He is God and He feels with perfect feelings. We must never forget that our Lord gave His life and died for us. He has done everything He can to save us and to create a relationship with us. And it cost Him unbelievable pain — the pain of the cross — the pain of bearing all the sins of the whole world — the pain of bearing the wrath of God against those sins — the pain of God the Father forsaking and rejecting Him when He bore our sins — such pain that it defies description — and it was all for us. Therefore, we must not hurt Him anymore. We must not crucify Christ anymore. We must not forsake Him for the world. We must not commit spiritual adultery against Him by turning to the world.

Heb 2:3 *How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

=> Spiritual adultery is not obeying the commandment of the Lord.

Judg 2:17 *Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshipped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands.*

=> Spiritual adultery is idolatry, the worshipping of other gods.

1 Chr 5:25 *But they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.*

Ezek 6:9 *Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me — how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices.*

Hosea 4:12 *Of my people. They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God.*

=> Spiritual adultery is unclean deeds and sinful behaviour.

Psa 106:39 *They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves.*

=> Spiritual adultery is giving oneself to detestable and vile things.

Ezek 20:30 *Therefore say to the house of Israel: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Will you defile yourselves the way your fathers did and lust after their vile images?’*

=> Spiritual adultery is forgetting God and turning one’s back upon Him.

Ezek 23:35 *Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “Since you have forgotten me and thrust me behind your back, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution.”*

=> Spiritual adultery is refusing to return to God and not acknowledging the Lord.

Hosea 5:4 *“Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the Lord.”*

=> Spiritual adultery is forsaking God.

Hosea 1:2 *When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.”*

Hosea 4:12 *Of my people. They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God.*

Hosea 9:1 *Do not rejoice, O Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God; you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor.*

=> Spiritual adultery is disbelief in Christ.

Mat 16:4 *“A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.*

=> Spiritual adultery is being ashamed of Christ and His Words.

Mark 8:38 *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

2. Being adulterous means that a person is actually committing adultery. The people of that day lived in a generation just like all other generations, a generation where immorality and all forms of sexual vices were running rampant. As Jesus said, “This is an adulterous generation” — a generation that is so full of sexual immorality that it can be characterized as adulterous. Some believers had apparently been caught up in the immorality of the world, living lives of impurity. They are called adulterous because that was just what they were. They were having affairs behind closed doors and in the dark.
3. Note a third thing, the question asked by Scripture: “Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?” What does this mean? Just what Scripture says: the person who is a friend of the world is the enemy of God. What does it mean to be a friend of the world?

- => It means to live for this world and the things of the world: houses, lands, money, position, power, popularity, clothes, recognition and anything else in this world that people focus upon and put before God.
- => It means to seek the things of this world so much that you will deceive, lie, cheat and steal to get them.
- => It means to seek the fleshly pleasures and partying of this world.

Everything in this world passes away. This world is physical and material; therefore, it has the seed of corruption in it. Because of this it stands against God. It is not eternal nor holy and righteous like God. Therefore, any person who is a friend of this world stands against God. He stands against all that God is.

- => An impure person is an enemy of God's purity.
- => An unholy person is an enemy of God's holiness.
- => A deceptive, lying person is an enemy of God's truthfulness.
- => A covetous, banking, hoarding person is an enemy of God's heart that gives sacrificially.
- => A worldly minded person is an enemy of God's will for man.

On and on the list could go, but the point is clear: the person who is a friend of this world, who focuses upon this world, is an enemy of God.

Mat 6:24 *"No one 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."*

Mat 16:26 *"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Luke 21:34 *"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap."*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty.*

Col 3:2 *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

Titus 2:12 *It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

Mat 15:8 *'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'*

Rom 8:7-8 *The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

Eph 2:12 *Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

V. James 04:05–06 Cure: The Holy Spirit

What is the cause of temptation and wrongdoing? This passage has told us there are four causes:

- => Desires: the passion for pleasure and gratification.
- => Distrust: desiring something and never trusting God or asking Him for it.
- => Praying amiss: praying with the wrong motive.
- => Worldliness: friendship with the world.

These are the causes of temptation and wrongdoing. Now, what is the cure for temptation and wrongdoing? There are two cures.

1. Believers must know this: the Spirit of God yearns over us with jealousy. Note that this point is a question: “Do you think?” The point is something that we *must think about and know*. The Holy Spirit who dwells in believers...
 - envies intensely, yearns, desires and longs after us.
 - yearns with envy and jealousy over us.

When does the Holy Spirit yearn over us with jealousy? All the time, but in a special way when temptation confronts us and we do wrong. The Holy Spirit is always yearning over us and He is always jealous over us. But if we turn away from Christ and become a friend of the world — if we become adulterous — the Spirit of God does not cast us off and turn away from us. He loves us and cares for us and wants to save us. He yearns and longs for us with deep, intense jealousy — yearns and longs for us to return to Christ and give Him our full devotion.

The point is this: the believer is to know that the Spirit of God is exactly like this. When the believer is heavily tempted and does wrong, he is not cast off and rejected and forsaken by God. God still loves the believer — no matter what he does. God yearns and longs for the believer to return to Him — yearns and longs with deep, intense jealousy. When the believer knows this, then he knows the first great cure for temptation and wrongdoing. And he is far more able to repent and return to God.

Why? Because he is so deeply loved by God — so much so that God yearns for him with a jealous, envious love. And love attracts and pulls the believer back to God. Scripture clearly declares that God is a jealous God.

Exo 20:5 *You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.*

Exo 34:14 *Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

Deu 32:16 *They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols.*

Deu 32:21 *They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.*

Zec 8:2 *This is what the Lord Almighty says: “I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.”*

Thought 1. God has placed His Spirit into the hearts of believers to lead them through all the temptations and trials of life and to convict and lead them to repentance when they sin. The Holy Spirit yearns and covets souls; He wants no believer to turn away from Christ.

John 14:26 *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

John 16:7-11 *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: In regard to sin because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

Rom 8:9-11, 13-14 *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

1 Cor 3:16 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Gal 5:16-17 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*

Gal 5:22-25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desire. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Eph 4:30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

1 Th 5:19 *Do not put out the Spirit's fire.*

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

2. Believers must know this: God gives the humble believer grace and more grace, but He opposes the proud. Grace means the favour and blessings of God, any favour and blessing which God gives. When the believer faces temptation or does wrong, God meets the believer's need, no matter what it is: strength, wisdom, power, perseverance, patience, forgiveness. The believer does not deserve God's grace and blessing, but God loves him. Therefore, God gives him whatever he needs. In fact, God gives more grace, that is, grace upon grace, grace and more grace.

But note a critical fact: not every believer and not every person receives God's grace. God meeting our need is not an automatic thing. Not everyone's needs are met. In fact, the very opposite is true. If a person is proud — if he is stiff-necked, haughty and rebellious against God — God opposes the person. God wants to pour His grace out upon the person, but if the person hardens himself and rebels against God and continues to live on in his sin, God has no choice. God is shut out of the person's life; therefore, grace is rejected. God can do nothing for the person. But note something else as well. God has to oppose the person. He has to consider the person...

- a rebel • a curser • an antagonist
- a traitor • an enemy • a sinner

God has to stand against the sinner and his evil. God has to oppose and set himself against and eventually put him to the most terrible shame.

But this is the glorious gospel: God gives grace and more grace to the humble. The person who turns to God away from the world and his wrongdoing will receive all the grace from God he will ever need. God will look after and care for him just like a child — loving, nourishing, nurturing, feeding, clothing, sheltering, protecting and giving more and more life to him forever and ever.

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

Heb 4:16 *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.*

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

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.*

Prov 3:34 *He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.*

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.” ■*

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).

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.” ■*