

31. Bait, temptation and trap

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Temptation is the oldest of all the inner conflicts in the human heart. It started from the Garden of Eden when the serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. There is not one person, including Christ, who hasn't struggled with it. And, except for Christ, there is not one person who hasn't suffered the consequences of yielding to it.

We often think that temptation is limited in its meaning to sexual lust. But there are many other ways in which we can be tempted. Let's look at two others as well as the sexual kind:

- 1) **Material temptation:** This is a lust for things.
- 2) **Personal temptation:** This is a lust for statues.
- 3) **Sensual temptation:** This is the lust for physical pleasure.

A. RISING ABOVE

Genesis 39:1-6 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. 5 So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. 6 Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Joseph could be bitter against God and reject Him from his life. Instead of having his own pity party, God's blessing coupled with Joseph's personal integrity have inspired Potiphar's absolute confidence and trust. Throughout chapter 39, we find the phrase "the Lord was with Joseph" for four times. Even his Egyptian master Potiphar noticed the hands of God in Joseph's life. That speaks volume in the integrity and work ethics of Joseph which we all should learn from him.

B. THE TEMPTATION THAT ENDS UP IN DEATH

Eskimo people have a very effective and special way to hunt those infamous Alaskan Wolves. First, they sharpen their knives extremely sharp, especially around the tip of the blades. Then they apply fresh blood of sheep on them and allow them to be frozen. They repeat this same procedure for several times.

After that, they take these knives to the wolf's frequent trail and bury the knives with the handles in the ground and the blades sticking out. Even though the sheep's blood are frozen, the fresh blood smell can not escape a wolf's ultra sensitive nose.

A wolf comes over and starts to lick the blood covered frozen blade. Because the blade is so cold it numbs the wolf's tongue a little, but it still can taste the fresh blood. As the wolf licks the razor sharp blade, its own tongue starts to bleed. But he doesn't even notice it.

Now, the wolf can really taste the warm blood and it drives the wolf to lick the blade more vigorously. The wolf doesn't even realize that he was killing himself. Next morning, the eskimo hunter goes out to the wolf's trail and find the wolf bleed to death by a simple blade without a fight or chase.

C. THE FOUR POINTS TO MAKE

Please note what I said about this Eskimo people's hunting method:

1) They put their blade in the area wolves are familiar with.

The devil does not tempt us while we are in the fighting mode. He realizes that we are in full alert spiritually. So he waits for opportune times when our guards are down in our familiar territories.

2) The wolf's tongue becomes numb as it licks the frozen blade.

When we get into temptation, nothing matters to us. We completely forget about our families, the people whom we have fellowship together and most importantly we forget our God Jesus Christ.

3) The wolf starts to bleed and doesn't even realize that he is bleeding.

Once we end up in the devil's trap, we don't even realize that we are in trouble. All we are concerned about is that we want a little more carnal desires to be met.

4) The wolf gets killed by bleeding to death.

As time goes by, the longer we are in temptation, the harder it is for us to get out. Pretty soon, we are be completely trapped inside and become another victim of the devil.

Whether you are tempted by pornography, alcohol, drugs or whatever, you have enough strength within you to resist and fight back, if you are a born-again Christian. Because Almighty God, the Holy Spirit lives in you as a guarantee for your eternal life.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

However, if we depend on our own strength to fight back against the devil's temptation, we will lose every fight. But with God, we can overcome his temptations and traps.

D. THE KING WHO DIDN'T FIGHT BACK AGAINST TEMPTATION

2 Samuel 11:1-5 1 It happened in the spring of the year, (1) at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 Then it happened (2) one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And (3) from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then (4) David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she

returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

We find four faults one after another by king David that led him to sin against God and against the people God entrusted with.

1) "At the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him."

Why in the world was David not going out to the battles and sitting around in the house? He got too confident in his own leadership and capability. He thought his general Joab was enough to handle any battle. He felt that he doesn't need to get into the battle. But he didn't realize that he was in the middle of spiritual battle and about to lose it.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

2) "One evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house."

When we have too much time in our hands, we all have tendency to get into trouble. This is a case in point. David was bored out of his gourd. His spiritual guard was completely down. He was a sitting duck and an open season for the devil.

3) "From the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold."

There is nothing you can do to stop a bird flying over your head, but you can stop that bird making a nest on your head. We can accidentally get to see or do something we should not. We can ask God to help us move out of that situation and stay away from it. But king David was staring at this woman bathing and desiring her.

Even though king David had 300 wives and concubines at his disposal, he wanted this woman. Because he didn't control his passion before, and he didn't obey to God's command for one wife, he was already failing in this battle.

Our carnal desires can not be satisfied. The more we get, the more we want. If you used illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling or pornography before, you know what I am talking about. You cannot satisfy with one line of cocaine, one can of beer, one puff of marijuana or one glance of pornography. Your body demands more. At this point, your body dictates your spirit.

At the moment being sucked into temptation, God becomes quite unreal to us, we lose all reality, and only carnal desire is real. Satan does not here fill us with hatred against God at that time, but he helps us forget about God. So, king David chose to forget everything including his loving and holy God.

Our God is so gracious to all of us. He wants to stop our sins before it gets worse. If king David stopped here and asked God to forgive him from having carnal thought, it would not have been a big problem. God used a soft-footed servant to remind the king that Bathsheba was the wife of his own soldier.

4) "David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her."

King David still had a choice. But he would not stop at this point. Nothing matters to him.

King David's sin brought a terrible consequence to his family, to his kingdom and gave opportunities to the enemy of God to blaspheme His name.

E. THE YOUNG MAN WHO FOUGHT BACK AGAINST TEMPTATION

Genesis 39:7-12 And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But (1) he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. (2) How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that (3) he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. 11 But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, 12 that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But (4) he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.

Please note what this young man Joseph is doing in comparison with king David:

1) "He refused and said to his master's wife"

Please remember that Joseph was a young man just like any teenager in America. He could have his hormone to override what the Lord speaks to him in his heart. But He wouldn't allow himself to fall for his master's wife's temptation.

2) "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Joseph brought God in this situation. He thought about the consequences of his action that would bring shame to the name of our God.

But Mrs. Potiphar isn't interested in the sanctity of her marriage or the trust between her husband and Joseph. She is interested only in gratifying her physical lust – NOW. Nothing else.

Many times sex between unmarried or extramarital adultery is nothing more than gratifying physical lust, not true love God wants us to have between husband and wife.

3) "He did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her"

Joseph didn't take a chance of being with her. He stayed away from her. Because if he stuck around her, he knew he would fall for her.

4) "He left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside"

Joseph didn't care if he had to leave his garment behind or not. He resisted her and ran away from her.

In almost every instance where the issue of sexual lust is dealt with in the New Testament, we're told to flee, to get up and run. Some temptations we're to stand and resist. But when it comes to sensual lust, we're told to do exactly as Joseph did – Get out of there. If we stay, we're likely to give in.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

F. A FALSE RAPE CHARGE

Genesis 39:13-18 And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, 14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15 And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside." 16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; 18 so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

Mrs. Potiphar was humiliated. It has been said, "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, nor hell a fury like a woman scorned." All the lust that has smoldered in Mrs. Potiphar suddenly blazes into fury. She wants revenge for the rejection from Joseph.

G. PRISON INSTEAD OF PRAISE

Genesis 39:19-23 So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused. 20 Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

Joseph did the right thing. But once he got outside, he didn't hear a praise from God and His angels. What he heard instead was the scream of woman – a scream that hurled him from the heights as Potiphar's overseer to the depths of an obscure prison cell. It seems that God lost control.

No, God is not done with Joseph yet. He is going to put him through more training to make him to be the way God wants.

It has been said, "Christian is a lot like tea bags. You don't know what they are made of until you put them into hot water."

H. APPLICATIONS

1) Do not give yourself any opportunity to be in temptation. But if you, somehow, end up there, run away from it. If you linger, you will fall for it.

2) There is a strong power against you while you are being tempted or sinning if you keep it in secret. If you inform other brothers or sisters in the Lord for you being tempted or in the process of your sin, you will notice that the power of temptation is gone and you will be set free from that temptation.

If you want to be continuously tempted and head for troubles, you may remain in silence. But if you want to be set free, you need to confess it someone you can trust.

3) By yielding to temptation, we may lose in a moment what it takes a lifetime to gain.

4) We must remember that satan does not here fill us with hatred against God at the time of temptation, but he helps us to forget about God.

5) The temptations we experience are not more than we can handle. We have the Helper from heaven to overcome and resist – the Holy Spirit within us.