

Five Temptations of the Age

God has given us but a short time here upon earth, and yet our entire eternity depends upon how we use this short time.

The 39th chapter of Genesis portrays for us a picture of the age in which we live! It also brings to our attention what the Lord can and will enable persons to do in resisting temptation, if we are completely surrendered to the will of God. Joseph said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9b).

You may recall the events that took place prior to Genesis 39 in the life of young Joseph. He had been cruelly treated by his own brothers and sold to a company of Ishmaelites, who in turn took him down to Egypt where he was bought by Potiphar, a high-ranking officer of King Pharaoh. But the Lord was with Joseph and made him prosper. He made Potiphar's house prosperous because of Joseph; and before very long, Joseph, a stranger in the land, was put in complete charge over the house of Potiphar.

Sometime later, Potiphar's wife cast a lustful eye upon Joseph and asked him to commit adultery with her. She tried to entice him day by day. Remember that Joseph was a young man in a far off country, away from home and parental guidance. He could have reasoned, "I'm away from home now, I'm on my own, I can do as I please, and no one will ever know about it." But Joseph belonged to the Lord, he had dedicated his life to the will of God, and conducted himself accordingly. Thus Joseph said to Mrs. Potiphar, "Thou art his wife, how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Notice the two parts in Joseph's answer to Mrs. Potiphar. First, he said that it would be very wicked. There is nothing incidental or meaningless about immorality; it is a great wickedness. Secondly, he said that it would be a sin against God. Impurity has two evils, and Joseph revealed them. It is a wickedness against society and a sin against God.

Mrs. Potiphar wasn't satisfied with Joseph's answer. She didn't give up, but continued to beg and coax. (The devil is not easily discouraged; he does not readily give up!) She proceeded to set a trap for him (Genesis 39:11-12). But Joseph was on the Lord's side; he was fully aware of the power of temptation. He "fled and got him out!" How wise he was! I encourage each of us to do likewise. 2 Timothy 2:22 says it like this: "**Flee** youthful lusts."

A businessman was making his sales by calling from door to door. On one particular day he came to a house and at the yard gate he saw a sign, "Beware of Dog." He had seen such signs before and had encountered other dogs without incident, so he proceeded through the gate and down the walk. As he approached the house, he noticed a dog lying on the porch. He watched it a bit cautiously, but it was lying there and made no move. He thought that everything would be all right. But just as he proceeded up the steps, the dog moved! The salesman didn't wait to see what would happen; he simply turned and ran and cleared the yard fence without even opening the gate!

Now that is what we ought to do when tempted to sin. We shouldn't wait for a second look to see how inviting it might be or how dangerous it is going to be, but we should flee youthful lusts. Young people,

and older folks too, have many temptations to face in our age. We want to look at five of them and see what God's Word has to say concerning each one.

1. Self-Indulgence

Self-indulgence means to be complacent toward, to give way to, or to practice a forbidden or questionable act without restraint. The world's motive for living is to satisfy self with little or no regard for the welfare of others. The world says, "Enjoy yourself, get a thrill, have fun, and use no restraints."

The area of self-indulgence that we want to think about primarily is in the realm of sexual morality. The Scriptures do not give anyone the liberty to practice impurity in action or in thought without reaping the consequences. Charles Hostetter once related the following experience: It was shocking news to learn that the man was dead. The officials called it suicide. The man was in his early thirties, a practicing medical doctor. He had ability and the potential for a successful career, but it ended in a suicide. With great vigor he had defended the viewpoint that sexual intercourse for unmarried people is not wrong. He maintained, since God made us the way we are, it is a **natural** desire of the flesh, so we have every right to go ahead and gratify that desire just as we satisfy a physical appetite for food. He contended that if both parties were agreed, if they were smart enough to avoid pregnancy, and if they were mature enough to take the obligations that would follow, it would be perfectly all right to go ahead. He smiled at my defense of purity and chastity and said that my interpretation of God's Word was simply out-of-date and old-fashioned. But his potentially successful career ended within a few years in a horrible nightmare—just another illustration showing us that "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

The prevalent moral philosophy among high school, college, and university students today is expressed in the following statement by the president of a student body organization in one of our influential colleges: he said, "Last summer I met this girl, and it wasn't long before we were having an affair. I see nothing wrong with having sexual relations before marriage as long as we're mature enough to accept the responsibilities, and it's done in love, and no one gets hurt." But you know, he was wrong on all three points. Those who engage in pre-marital sex aren't mature, it's not love, and someone is getting hurt. One cannot violate the laws of God without letting scars on the soul (1 Peter 2:11).

Ecclesiastes 11:9 says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." That sounds good, doesn't it? That sounds like we can do as we please—but notice what the last half of that verse says: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Go ahead and have your fun; but remember, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. "So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

2. Pleasure-Seeking

Pleasure-seeking means the attempt to gratify the senses. Worldly pleasures tend to produce agreeable sensations, frivolous enjoyment, what the human (carnal) will desires and prefers, and that which is pleasing to the physical nature. But Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your affection on things above, not on

things on the earth,” and 1 John 2:15 says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Yet many people in our pleasure-soaked age seemingly cannot learn that worldly pleasures do not bring lasting satisfaction.

We do need to have joyful periods of refreshing relaxation, but our main concern in this second area of temptation is that we be careful not to give pleasure-seeking first place in our lives and that we don’t seek pleasure in questionable ways that are detrimental to our spiritual growth. The following guidelines can be used to help us determine which pleasures may be harmful:

- (1) Can I, as a Christian, engage in this pleasure and still be on the Lord’s side?
- (2) Is this pleasure consistent with the principles of purity demanded in the Christian life?
- (3) Is the activity in question a fruit of the Spirit or a work of the flesh?
- (4) Does it draw me nearer to my Lord, or does it separate me farther from His fellowship?
- (5) Does it help me bring others to Christ, or does it serve as a hindrance (as a stumbling block) in my witness and testimony to others?

The fact is evident that multitudes do not consider their ways. Many can be found seeking pleasure and satisfaction in following after worldly **amusements**. The word “muse” means to think, to study, to ponder, to meditate upon, to be deeply in thought. But when you put an “a” in front of the word “muse,” and the four letters “ment” after it, then you have the word “amusement” which means “to be entertained.”

Do the pleasures and entertainments of this world really give satisfaction? One magazine says that for months the radio had been emitting the clearly voiced answer in the nasal tones of a young man with his twanging guitar, “I can’t get no satisfaction!” But, beware! A false satisfaction, it seems, does come from a gratification of the senses—cigarettes, alcoholic drinks, luxurious living, etc. But what does **this kind** of satisfaction produce? The fruit of it is evidenced in our jam-packed juvenile reformatories, in our overflowing divorce courts, and in the decaying structures of authority—the home, the classroom, the community, and the church. These are fruits of the satisfaction gained from the pleasures that the world has to offer.

The world also offers gratification through the theaters (whether they be indoor or outdoor), and television shows bring the same thing right into the living room. How many who have television brought it into the home after a season of prayer? Movie shows and television, dancing and poolrooms, carnivals and games of chance, places frequented by ungodly people, roller-skating rinks, and ice capades (only to name a few), are pleasures sponsored by the world and should not be sought after by the Christian. They have no place in the life of a child of God. Christian people do need recreation and good times of fellowship, but the church’s goal is to seek and to win souls for Christ. Therefore our activities need to be on a plane higher than those just named.

3. Love of Display

Love of display means to unfold or to spread out, to exhibit, to expose to view so as to attract attention. In other words, this would include anything which we want to show off. What is it in your life that you want others to see? In a Christian's life, it will be a radiant testimony for Jesus, in order that those with whom he comes in contact will know by his speech, conduct, and appearance that he belongs to Jesus. The hymn writer so aptly says it like this:

"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity,
Oh, Thou Spirit Divine, all my nature refine
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

One of the strongest ways in which Satan tempts people today (in love of display) is in their personal appearance. An elderly Quaker woman having a beautiful complexion was asked what kind of cosmetics she used. In reply she offered this prescription: "I use for my lips, truth; for my voice, prayer; for my eyes, pity; for my hands, charity; for my figure, uprightness; for my heart, love. This prescription can be filled without expense, and the supply will increase with continued use." I agree heartily with what the lady so wisely stated.

God does not want our lips and our nails to be of a different color; or hair, of a different shade; or our bodies, bedecked with jewelry and beads. Isaiah the prophet foresaw the day when self would be displayed, "For thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal; uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh" (Isaiah 47:1-2). Isaiah here says, "Uncover thy locks." This can be interpreted to mean the unveiling of the head and the cutting of the hair. This is one area of "love of display" that we have upon us today. Why do Christian people spend undue time fixing and fashioning the hair, except it be for the simple reason to attract the attention of others to themselves. Pride in the heart is the main reason why people want to be like the world. The Bible states very simply that Christian women shall have long, veiled hair. (1 Corinthians 11:5-10). Those who are following the Scriptural teaching in a simple, obedient way, are to be commended.

Isaiah also prophesied "making bare the leg, and uncovering the thigh." The wearing of short skirts and other immodest clothes is a clear fulfillment of the prophecy. Many are making fashion their god. Their time, money, and thoughts are given to dress. They worship at the shrine of public opinion. What the crowd does, what the people think—this is what governs their attitudes and their actions. People (men and women) are more concerned with being accepted by society than they are about what the Lord says in passages such as 1 Timothy 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:4.

In the eyes of God, dress is important. If what you are wearing is what the world suggests, and if what you are wearing calls attention to yourself, then you are not attracting people to the One whom you are appointed to represent. Concerning the matter of dress, people should be able to see a difference between you and the worldly crowd. Christians should be neatly attired. Christians should be displaying the Christ-like character traits like those expressed by the elderly Quaker woman. However, if necklines are cut too low, if dresses are too tight, skirts are too short, if materials are sheer or bright colored, if

boy's trousers are too tight, we are displaying self (calling attention to the physical body), and we may be the cause of a lustful thought in the mind of someone else.

4. Prodigality

Prodigality means to be extravagant in spending, or to be wasteful in any area of life. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 says, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the **love of money** is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Western nations have never before known a time when money flowed so freely and people had such ready access to it. We're encouraged to buy. "If you have no money, open a charge account and you won't need to start paying on it until a year from now. Go ahead and buy, whether you have the money or not." That's prodigality! Many people seem to think they can do anything they please, so long as they'll be able to pay for it—sometime. Even Christians are being caught in this trap. The present abundance of money and buying power has caused many in our day to lack appreciation of true values:

Money can buy a bed, but not sleep;
Money can buy books, but not brains;
Money can buy food, but not an appetite;
It can buy finery, but not beauty;
It can buy a house, but not a home;
It can buy medicine, but not health;
Money can buy luxuries, but not culture;
Money can buy amusements, but not happiness.

Another area manifesting prodigality is in the area of our use of time. Are you using your time wisely and to the best of your ability? There are twenty-four hours in each day. Taylor said, "God has given to man a very **short** time here upon earth." When people live to be ninety-six years of age, we think that seems long. But they say it's short; they can't understand where the time got to. God has given to us a short time here upon earth, and yet our entire eternity depends upon how we use this short time.

We are called to be stewards of time and money. In the day of Judgment, we will have to give an account as to how we have used our time, our money, our influence, our talents, and our reputation. We are also stewards of the plan of salvation to share it with others and to spread the Good News. What kind of a challenge have we been to others? Let us use the time that we have to God's honor and glory.

5. Revelry

The last temptation we want to mention is revelry. Revelry means carousing; disorderly and noisy festivity; having a good time in a carnal way. This temptation is classified in the Bible under the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:21. Revelry can be divided into two categories: (1) Reveling or so-called entertainment for personal enjoyment. (2) Reveling for revolt or rebellion against authority.

The last part of 1 Peter 3:4 says that we should be adorned with “a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” The noisy, disorderly nature of many activities is not becoming to a Christian.

When a young man equips his automobile with a loud muffler and squeals his tires and grinds gears, he lets a bad testimony. And what about loud, noisy, boisterous talking and jesting? This does not exemplify the meek and quiet spirit. We need also to be careful of our conduct in the worship service. Some unsaved person might be observing us. If we distract his attention in any way, thus causing the Spirit to be quenched, we will be held responsible.

The other area of reveling, that of revolt or rebellion against authority, is best illustrated to us in the incidents that take place when employees strike, and students refuse to accept instruction, and when people march against government actions.

There is a kind of rebellion though that **does** have meaning and purpose. It’s the greatest revolution in history, the most far reaching; I’d encourage you to join it now. The revolt against hypocrisy and injustice, against hate and force as a way of life; a revolt against evil in our own lives and in the lives of others as well. This is a revolt that could heal our lands and restore our nations. This is what man needs in order that he might have a pure heart, clean hands, a clear conscience, and a commanding purpose. This revolt is joined by giving your heart and life to Jesus Christ. Take your orders from Him, and He will give you the power of the Holy Spirit. Satan’s motive for tempting you is nothing more than an effort to spoil your life, to damn your soul, and to ruin your future. Turn to Christ for salvation and deliverance. You will find that “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

-Luke B. Bucher

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