

A way of Escape out of Temptation

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[0 : 0 0] We shall sing to God's praise from Psalm 78. Psalm 78 at verse 14.

Psalm 79.

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Psalm 79. Psalm 79. The Lord did hear not once it was, So kindled woes of it Against Jacob and against Israel Amen, Ignatian King I'd like us to turn for a short while to this portion of scripture that we read together, 1st Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 10.

We can read again verse 13. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful who will not suffer you, to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

One thing this verse brings to our attention is that the experience of temptation is common to all.

[6 : 1 6] And if you ask anyone, it doesn't matter who it is, if they have ever been tempted, they'll be able to give you an answer of sorts.

Some will be able to speak of eating a bar of chocolate, or an extra portion of chips, or rolling over in bed in the morning and grabbing an hour extra in bed.

And in a sense they're quite right. They've experienced temptation of sorts. And they've succumbed to it.

But that is not the temptation of which the Apostle speaks. That is not temptation in the sense the Apostle means us to understand it.

In the original Greek, the word that is used by the Apostle is the word pyrasmos. And the meaning of that word is essentially to test or to try.

[7 : 3 9] And Paul is concerned to speak about the testing and the trying of God's people in particular as they make their way through the world.

It is a trial designed to expose or to bring to light what is positive at times and at other times to expose or to bring to light things that need to be dealt with.

As I said, the statement of this passage suggests that it is a universal experience.

And it is very much universal in the sense that this world has always been made aware of the reality of temptation from the very beginning.

Well, at least from the experience of the fall. So, that is where we must begin to understand what is meant by the experience of temptation.

[9 : 03] All we have to do is go back to the very beginning of the scripture in chapter 3 in the book of Genesis. And there we are introduced to the first temptation.

Now, if you read carefully through the chapter, there is no mention made of the word temptation there. Yet, nevertheless, temptation took place. We read in that chapter of how Satan, in the guise of a serpent, came to Eve and enticed her to sin.

And what we are meant to understand by temptation is that in its very nature, it will lead to sin.

Although we must understand that the temptation itself is not a sin. I think we have to guard against that. Particularly, if we believe what the scripture says concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

The scripture tells us, and even this passage that we have read here, brings to our attention that Jesus is numbered amongst those who experience temptation.

[10 : 37] And clearly, he is without sin. Sin was not something that was in his experience, other than in that he confronted it.

He never yielded to sin. The Apostle James wrote in the first chapter, Now, when we look at the experience of Eve in the garden, when she encountered the serpent.

Theologians try and understand what is inexplicable. How temptation could actually occur in a closed environment where sin had not yet taken place.

And perhaps there is no answer to that. What we do know about Adam was that God presented Adam with the path of obedience, which involved him in not eating of the forbidden fruit.

God was not testing Adam in order that Adam sinned.

[12 : 34] But when it comes to Satan, that is exactly what he is doing. His temptation of Adam through Eve is a temptation to sin.

There is that difference. The trial of Adam took place at God's behest. The testing, the temptation, if you like, which on the surface appears to be a temptation to sin.

But that is not the way it was. When God set before Adam the tree that was bearing the forbidden fruit, he told Adam explicitly, this fruit is forbidden.

That was a requirement placed upon him, that he obey God and not partake of the fruit. Now, when Satan came to tempt Adam, through Eve albeit, it was to eat what God had forbidden.

And the temptation was to sin. The temptation was to disobey God. And that is the first experience we have in the scripture of that.

[14 : 01] The original command, as we read, was not a command to sin, but a command not to sin.

Now, theologians enjoy to spend time, I suppose, discussing this point and trying to get to the heart of it in a philosophical sense.

And in many ways they struggle to deal with something that is so difficult to explain. Let me give some examples. They'll discuss this in terms of the process of temptation and the outcome of temptation.

Beginning, first of all, with doubt, a question arising in the heart of our first parents concerning God's goodness.

Questioning on the basis of a seed sown in their mind by the enemy of their soul concerning God's goodness.

[15 : 09] Once that seed of doubt is sown, it is followed by unbelief. And unbelief then results in disobedience.

And disobedience, in the experience of our first parents, was the disobedience resulting which you can call sin. Sin is any want of conformity unto our transgression of the law of God.

God's law, that point was, you shall not eat of it. The disobedience of Adam was the eating of the forbidden fruit.

And in their experience, and so in our experience, because they were, Adam was our covenant head. When he sinned, we sinned.

When he fell, we fell. And his disobedience became our disobedience. And our experience of temptation is arising out of that.

[16 : 18] Now, I don't want to spend more time on this because it's a very interesting area of study for any person to think about. and there's a whole host of different approaches to it.

But purely from this point, the universality of the experience of temptation, we find it beginning in the garden and then followed on as an experience that is in the world from that point on.

There are many examples within the scripture where you see temptation in or nuances of temptation in its various forms.

You look at the temptation and it was a temptation where Esau was tempted to surrender his birthright and he sold his birthright and it was this process that took place in his experience.

You'll see it in the experience of countless saints and I suppose that has to be highlighted that there are occasions when it is the saints that are spoken of that experience temptation and succumb to temptation.

[17 : 42] We know that David was tempted when he saw the figure of Bathsheba a married woman somebody else's wife and the temptation led him into sin.

You read again of well any number of examples in the Old Testament Gehazi a servant of of I have to go back now in my mind he was a servant of Elijah and Elijah had told him explicitly that he was not to take a reward from Naaman the Syrian who Elijah had healed from from leprosy but Gehazi succumbed to temptation and went out of his way and that ultimately concluded with sin.

Going to the New Testament perhaps you could maybe it's hardly right to have the name of Peter alongside the name of Judas and at some point in the experience of Judas temptation was at the heart of the process that he followed where he became the betrayer of the Lord Jesus Christ in the experience of Peter there was a denial of Christ and again there was a process into which he entered where he denied his Lord and you can find perhaps a point at which that process began maybe it's hidden from sight but the point that I want to make concerning it is that scripture tells us that temptation is right it is a universal experience it is a universal experience on the part of the

Lord's people they are not they are not preserved from that experience although they are equipped to resist it and that is what the apostle Paul wants us to understand that there is a possibility of being able to resist temptation and the scripture tells us that when we resist temptation even when it comes from the devil we are told that the outcome will be that he flees from us well the second thing is as well as being universal we are taught within the scripture that there are many sources of temptation some would argue that there is only one source of temptation and that source is Satan and in a sense

I suppose you could argue that and we know that if we go back to the garden that is certainly where the temptation arose the scripture tells us Paul himself says the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety he attributes the temptation of Eve to the subtlety of Satan there is no ambiguity Satan is at the heart of it and we know that the scripture when it speaks of the temptation of the Lord it speaks of Satan as being the tempter the tormentor of the Lord he is the one the spirit leads the Lord into the wilderness and there he is confronted by Satan and he tempts him and we have often thought and I could be completely wrong on this that we are told of three examples of the experience of the

[22 : 03] Lord in the wilderness that there are these three experiences that are recorded for us but there's no reason to suggest that these are just the only three that were his experience the devil had him at his mercy in a sense as far as his desire to wreak havoc in the life of the Lord and for 40 days and 40 nights he had him at his mercy in a sense and if we thought that the devil was not going to do everything in his power and to repeatedly assail the Lord then that would be more like what we have the scripture tells us specifically three instances where he was instrumental in the temptation of the Lord but as the Lord himself says repeatedly he had nothing in him that would bring about a certain conclusion as far as leading the

Lord into sin we also well we read in this passage here that the Lord speaks of himself as being tempted by those who are the Lord's people it's quite strange he says neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed and fell in one day three and twenty thousand neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents tempted tempted him just as you are tempting him he is saying and he's wanting them to be aware of that we also read that while satan i suppose is the arch enemy of god's people that we are quite convinced that there are many things that are attributed to satan that are not his doing suppose ultimately you could say that every every sin that is in the world his fingerprints are on it in a sense and you could argue that and

I suppose there is no sense in which it is a departure from what he wants more than anything else that he wants to destroy the name of God to deface the name of God to destroy God's people and anything and everything he can do either directly or indirectly using means and above means if he could but we have to remember that the devil is a creature who owes his existence to the God who created him and he is not free to do anything more than God permits him so if we attribute to the devil divine powers which we're doing God an injustice he doesn't possess these powers so when it comes to temptation we need to go beyond the focus of it being satanic although preeminently

I suppose the worst temptations that we can recognize he is at the heart of them but we must remember also that scripture tells us that when sin came into the world the capacity to sin was something that marked out all of God's creation in particular humankind from the moment that man became sinful the capacity to sin marked them out and with the capacity to sin there is the capacity to be drawn to sin either directly or indirectly you read the words of Paul to the Ephesians in time past we walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh and of our mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others that's the way men were women were and that ability that capacity still is there even when it is a child of

God even when sin is no longer in mastery it is still possible for the child of God to succumb to temptation and to the work of the devil or the inclinations of a sinful heart that is not governed by grace if you read Hebrews 11 you have in Hebrews 11 an account given to you of the saints of God many of them and it tells you in that passage some of the experiences of the saints the experience torture mocking scourging bonds and imprisonments stoned son a sander tempted slain with the sword now all of these others apart from tempted you could say these are things that were done to the child of

[28 : 47] God they were tortured they were mocked they were scourged they were imprisoned they were stoned they were sawn asunder there's more to that list but it mentions in the list temptation now that means in that sense that they were being tempted not from within but from without and there's two possibilities at least there that the temptation that came from without was a temptation to do something that they should not be doing and in a I suppose we could think of it in different ways and maybe there is more than two ways of thinking of it but the temptation that comes to the believer is to behave in ways that the unbeliever should not believe to do things the unbeliever should not do for example if you think about many of those

Christians who were in the world they experienced trials they experienced persecution and a great many of them resisted that even to the point of death but that does not mean that those who resisted to the point of death were not tempted because temptation was always put before them to deny the Lord and so avoid death a lot of the martyrs had this possibility presented to them just deny your faith and you'll be released deny your faith and we won't throw you to the lions deny your faith and you won't go to the cross and that is a temptation it's very real and it's a temptation to do something that is alien to their commitment to Christ there is a temptation perhaps in their experience to disbelieve the truth even without the possibility of their being persecuted or suffering the cause of persecution there are for yourself for example in this ungodly environment one thing you're being bombarded with daily is this the godless ethos that prevails within society the godless philosophy that dominates society and you're bombarded with that through the news media through your televisions through the reading of books of newspapers or whatever and the challenge to you and your faith is always to resist the thoughts that are being placed in your mind by such ungodly thinking and it's a very real challenge and it's a very real experience for many in the world that they find themselves almost drawn along with the thinking and the mindset of those who are against the gospel temptation is real temptation is something that that every one of us should be aware of

Paul says something here he says to the believer wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take it lest he fall that is a warning to the person who thinks that he is immune to temptation that he is immune from being drawn into the mindset of the unbeliever that he is above reproach as it were as far as the thinking of modern society is concerned Paul is saying watch yourself don't believe yourself to be in a position he is speaking here about people with privilege people with many gifts and yet what do they do they went back to idolatry they embraced idolatry and he is saying watch before your temptation the temptation that comes to you leads you astray I am conscious of the time and I am also conscious of that you are sitting wearing masks and I am not wearing them so I am quite comfortable speaking to you but I know there is discomfort involved in sitting wearing masks but Paul says here and I just want to say a word about that he says to them what they must understand there is no temptation taking you such as is common to man but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able not only is temptation a universal reality and experience of the

Christian believer along with all other Christian believers God knows that that is the way it is God not only knows it he understands the nature of it Christ Jesus suffered being tempted he was tempted according to the apostle like as you are yet without sin so he understands the nature of temptation and the experience of it and God understands that when we are tempted that we need to have this confidence to go to him in order to resist temptation in order to be able to not only recognize the nature of it and be able to deal with it not in our own way but with his help maybe a thought for you to toss around in your head if you have ever experienced temptation and you have when the temptation took place when it occurred did you ever at that very moment think that the temptation itself was a sin did you think at that moment that you were tempted that you were in some way feeling shame at that moment because of the temptation well I believe that that's part of the strategy of the enemy of your soul he wants you to feel shame he wants you to feel discomfort but if your temptation was being resisted at that moment if your temptation was recognized as a temptation and you were to go to

God in order to resist it you're not committing sin you're not succumbing to the temptation you are resisting and God is saying God knows he is able with the temptation to make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it one of the commentators I'm just going to quote him in conclusion he says this the way out is not to escape the trial or the temptation but to stand up under it God uses tastings and trials to make us spiritually mature and he quotes then the apostle James count it all joy he says when you fall into diverse temptations knowing that this is that this the trying of your faith worketh patience but let patience have a perfect work that you may be perfect and entire wanting nothing the experience if you understand what that we mentioned pyrasmus to begin with testing and trying

[37 : 21] God permitting it God allowing you in fact being the means by which you are exposed to a temptation not to make you sin but to enable you to see what that sin is and what that experience of sin may be and there you learn there you understand your weakness there you understand his power to equip you to face up to it and every one of us should be aware of the nature of temptation and the danger that it brings I think it was one of the Puritans I don't know which one he was saying he was just explaining the way temptation functions and he says we should understand that temptation is something that would bring us to God and that we should not we should not be surprised if temptation occurs in the way in our life in this world but we should not put ourselves in a situation where we are responsible for the temptation where we put ourselves in places or in situations where the temptation comes to us and we are going towards it because that means you are exposing yourself unnecessarily to danger that you and the

Puritan was saying that person is like a person who is setting a fire he is setting a fire and guilty at that moment of putting the house on fire because the material that he is gathering around himself is sufficient to ensure that that takes place and every one of us should guard against putting ourselves into such situations where we are putting our very soul in jeopardy by what we are doing well may God bless to us these few thoughts let us again join in prayer Lord help us to understand that temptation is an experience that every one of us would much rather not encounter humanly speaking and the griefs and the sorrows that have come our way when we have failed miserably to resist the devil or to resist our sinful inclinations but we give thanks that we can go to God to go to you the God who is able to equip us in our engagement with all manner of sin go before us we ask pardoning us in Jesus name

Amen I'm going to sing in conclusion again singing from Psalm 78 I'm going to sing from Psalm 78 and we can read at verse 36 yet with their mouth they flattered him and spake but faintly and they unto God of truth with their false tongues did lie for though their words were good their heart with him was not sincere and steadfast and perfidious they in his covenant were but full of pity he forgave their sin them did not slay nor stood up all his wrath but oft to sang it turned away for that they were but fading flesh to mind he did recall a wind that passes soon away and not return at all how often did they him provoke within the wilderness and in the desert did them grieve with their rebelliousness yea turning back they tempted God and limits set upon him who in the midst of Israel who is the only holy one we can sing from verse 38 but full of pity he forgave their sin them did not slay not

His anger for now we. For that they were but hidden flesh.

To mine he did recall. How when the possession away.

[42 : 49] And not reserves at all. How often did they improve.

Within the wilderness. And in the desert did him cleave.

With their rebelliousness. Yet her in black they tempted God.

And them were set upon. In the desert of the rest.

The holy holy one. Now may grace, mercy and peace.

[44 : 04] From God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Rest and abide with you all. Now and always. Amen.