

# How To Resist Temptation To Sin

What happens when we give into temptation and sin knowingly?

Do we lose our chance of salvation?

The answer is **no** as long as we continue to look to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as our **only** hope of salvation.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast.”*

Salvation is through faith in what God has done for all humanity through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

**John 3:16-18** [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

Christ the **only** source of our salvation.

**What then do we lose?**

**1 John 1:7** [NIV] *“But if we walk in the light, as he [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

We lose our fellowship with God, and our minds are darkened once again.

**Psalms 51:12** [NIV] *“Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”*

We lose the joy and peace of mind that salvation brings to our lives.

**1 Corinthians 3:10-15** [NIV] *“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*

When we give into temptations and sin we are **not** going to receive a reward on the judgement day at Jesus Christ’s return.

**Temptations to sin must be resisted.**

When we give into temptations we do so at our own peril and future regret.

As long as we are in physical human form we will be in a battle to overcome giving into temptations.

John Newton described this ongoing battle in this way.

I'm not what I ought to be.  
I'm not what I want to be.  
I'm not what I hope to be.  
But, thanks to God, I'm not what I used to be.

There will be in our lives more than one kind of temptation, and we are called by God to resist and overcome them all.

**James 1:13** [NIV] *“When tempted, no-one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;”*

The assumption is that we all will face temptations.

**John 16:33** [NIV] *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

One of the ways that temptation comes to us is through this world's society.

**1 Peter 1:16** [NIV] *“for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

We have been called by God to become Holy as God is Holy.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-5** [NIV] *“It is God's will that you should be sanctified: [made Holy] that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;”*

One major temptation that comes from the world's society is immoral sexuality.

Sanctification, that is the process of being made holy, is **not** a once and for all experience.

**Galatians 5:16-17** [NIV] *“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.”*

It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that makes us Holy.

**Galatians 5:19-21** [NIV] *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Here we have a list of what we are likely to be tempted to indulge in.

Note that when we give into such temptations we will be rejected by God and **not** inherit our reward in His Kingdom.

**Galatians 5:24-25** [NIV] *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

We are to follow Christ's example and resist these temptations.

**Giving in to temptations is what stops us from being made Holy by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.**

**Galatians 5:22-23** [NIV] *“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.”*

Such a God-like, holy nature **only** comes to us through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

When we walk with the Holy Spirit, then these God-like characteristics will “*rub off*” on us and become part of our nature.

**Temptations have to be dealt with before we can make any progress in sanctification, being made holy.**

Some people give in to temptation and sin because they have **not** been properly taught.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** [NIV] *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

We have the Holy Spirit inspired New Testament to teach us how to live a sin-free Christian life.

**John 16:12-14** [NIV] *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.**”*

The Holy Spirit will continue to open up the scriptures, He inspired, for us to understand and use to resist temptation and sinning.

This article is intended to be a study in using inspired New Testament scripture as good “*preventative spiritual medicine.*”

It is always better to prevent getting ill rather than finding the medicine for our spiritual sickness, after we have given in to temptation and have sinned.

### **What is temptation?**

Definition of temptation is “*being attracted to do something wrong or unwise by the prospect of pleasure or advantage.*”

The Greek word found in the New Testament is “*pěirazō*” which can refer to two situations, a trial or a temptation.

The same word is translated either one or both situations, according to context.

**James 1:2** [NIV] *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,”*

Translated “*trials*”.

**James 1:13** [NIV] *“When tempted, no-one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;”*

Translated “*tempted*”.

**1 Timothy 6:9** [NIV] *“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.”*

Translated “*temptation*”.

**In a time of temptation we are also being tried, that is, tested as to whether or not we will give in to what is wrong or unwise.**

**2 Corinthians 5:10** [NIV] *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

We are facing a trial, before a judge, the soon coming Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 7:1-2** [NIV] *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

Very timely advice directly from Jesus Christ, the Judge.

**1 Corinthians 11:31-32** [NIV] *“But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.”*

Paul is amplifying on what Jesus had said to His disciples.

**Any trial is a test, any temptation is a test.**

Sin, is what is wrong, not an expression of love towards God or other human beings, may be sexual, unbelief, hatred or murmuring.

**Romans 3:23** [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

Wrong or sin is any thought, word or action that falls short of God’s glory, which is His Love.

**1 John 4:8** [NIV] *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”*

God is love, the Greek word translated “love” is “agapé” a spontaneous love, irrespective of the rights or response of the person receiving that love. A sacrificial love where the selfish desires are sacrificed in order to show that love to others.

Such a love was perfectly expressed in the life and death of Jesus Christ the Son of God when He became the Son of Man in human form and lived on earth.

The attraction of a temptation may **not** always be pleasant.

Unbelief is **not** pleasant.

Murmuring or complaining is **not** pleasant.

But when we opt for unbelief or complaining, it is because the attraction, drawing power, was greater than our ability to resist.

The above may not be pleasant but it may seem to be the easier thing to do at the time of our trial or temptation.

A lack of wisdom may not necessarily be sin.

For example:-

**1 Corinthians 7:8, 36** [NIV] *“Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.” ... “If anyone thinks he is acting improperly towards the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting on in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married.”*

We may **not** agree with the advice given by a godly person.

Not taking the advice may be unwise but it is not necessarily sin.

Sin in this case would **not** be sin unless the person breaks the moral law.

**Exodus 20:14** [NIV] *“You shall not commit **adultery**.”*

Sex with another married person.

**1 Corinthians 6:18** [King James] *“**Flee fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”*

Sex before or outside marriage.

**Sin is that which either grieves the Holy Spirit or brings dishonour to God’s name.**

**Ephesians 4:30-31** [NIV] *“**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”*

Listed are things that we may be tempted to give in to, all of which will be sin against God and deadly to our spiritual growth and usefulness to God.

Division, slander or gossip, brings dishonour to God’s name.

**All sin eventually leads to regret but not necessarily repentance.**

**Romans 12:2** [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Not giving in to the temptations that this society offers to do what God’s Word tells us is wrong and sinful.

## **1. Within**

**James 1:13-15** [NIV] *“When tempted, no-one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but **each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed**. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

Our own human desire or nature which is a sinful nature.

**Romans 7:18-20** [NIV] *“**I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature**. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”*

**We all have this nature that is prone to sin within us.**

**Jeremiah 17:9** [NIV] *“**The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure**. Who can understand it?”*

There is within every human being this potential for the greatest evil.

**Psalms 51:5** [NIV] *“**Surely I was sinful at birth**, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*

We are all born with this potential to sin.

No human being needs to be trained *“how to sin.”*

Which I believe is the greatest evidence, if not proof, of original sin, that is we are all born sinners.

**Mark 7:21-23** [NIV] *“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’.”*

Within human nature all these evils are there like a powder keg waiting to be ignited.

Temptation is essentially part of what we all are naturally.

## **2. Without**

The without includes two origins or causes.

### **a) The world**

**1 John 2:15-17** [NIV] *“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 for ever.”*

The world refers to people, places and things.

People can tempt us, whether it is sexual immorality, anger or many other things that are wrong in the sight of a loving Creator God.

Places can tempt us because of the physical pleasures they promise us.

Things can tempt us, money, material possessions because of the prestige they promise.

### **b) Satan**

**Matthew 4:1** [NIV] *“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.”*

Satan tempted Jesus Christ as a human being as he does all human beings.

**1 Thessalonians 3:5** [NIV] *“For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.”*

All Christians are Satan’s prime target for temptations.

Satan’s chief goal is to divert us from being sanctified, being made Holy so we can live with a Holy Creator God for eternity.

Satan knows, better than we do ourselves, our weaknesses, our temperaments, our heart’s desire and our past sins.

**Ephesians 6:13** [NIV] *“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.”*

Each human being is earmarked by Satan for the “evil day” of temptations.

**1 Peter 5:8** [NIV] *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

Satan has a way of attacking us at most unexpected moments.

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15** [NIV] *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”*

Satan works through people and circumstances when any opportunity to tempt us to sin arises.

**We, not God, are responsible for our own temptations.**

**James 1:13-14** [NIV] *“When tempted, no-one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”*

This is the most important point that can be made in relationship to temptations.

Why?

The first thing we often think or say is *“God is tempting me.”*

This is also the suggestion that Satan will put into our minds, *“blame God for our temptation or trial.”*

Temptation always seems *“providential”*, that is, since it is convenient and timely with immediate circumstances, we think God must actually be in and behind this very moment of temptation.

**Genesis 3:6** [NIV] *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”*

Satan’s temptation of Eve appeared to her to be God’s own way of reasoning and speaking.

**Psalms 19:13** [King James] *“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”*

Eve’s sin was presumptuous thinking she knew better than what God had said to her.

**We must deal with every temptation as a “no go” area in our life.**

- a) We know ourselves to what extent we refuse the desire to increase or become more frequent.
- b) We must make a prior commitment not to sin, no matter how pressing the circumstances.
- c) Such commitment causes temptation to lose its feeling of inevitability and inescapability and lacks the inner desire it once had.
- d) What was once a scary temptation will become a mere suggestion, which we refuse to take on board.

**God only tests us by permitting a trial or temptation.**

God tested Abraham.

**Genesis 22:1-2** [NIV] *“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”*

Abraham knew this was a test and that the promises that God had given through Isaac would be fulfilled.

If he did offer Isaac as a sacrifice Abraham expected God to bring him back to life.

**Genesis 22:5** [NIV] *“He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then **we will come back to you.**”*

“We will come back” proves just what was in Abraham’s mind.

**2 Chronicles 32:31** [NIV] *“But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, **God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.**”*

God decided to leave Hezekiah, His servant, to test him and see what he was really like, what was in his heart.

**Job 1:8-12** [NIV] *“Then the LORD said to Satan, “**Have you considered my servant Job? There is no-one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.**” “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”*

God actually initiated Job’s trial by inviting Satan to test his faithfulness to his Creator God.

**Job 13:15** [NIV] *“**Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.**”*

Even if God allowed Satan to end his life, Job remained faithful to God.

**Job 42:1-6** [NIV] *“Then Job replied to the LORD: “I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. [“You said,] ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ **My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.**”*

The end result of that painful trial was Job knowing his Creator God more intimately and his own standing in the presence of his Creator God and his sovereignty over his life.

**There is a difference between temptation and sin.**

**Hebrews 4:15** [NIV] *“For we do not have a high priest [Jesus Christ] who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but **we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.**”*

Jesus Christ was tempted, but He did **not** allow the temptation to lead to sin.

If Jesus Christ was tempted we should **not** be surprised if we as His disciples are also tempted.

**It is not a sin to be tempted.**

Don’t allow Satan to implant in your mind that to be tempted is to sin, that is just another of his lies.

**Sin is only sin when we say yes to a temptation and give into it.**

That is when sin has been committed, not before.

**Any temptation is resistible, even when in the heat of the moment it seems to be irresistible.**

Even a suggestion can develop into a fiery temptation if it is not rejected at once.

**If we say yes to a temptation we can only blame ourselves.**

**1 Corinthians 10:13** [NIV] *“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.”*

This statement can apply equally to a temptation or a trial that God has allowed us to face.

When God allowed Satan to bring the painful trial on Job, God knew that Job would remain faithful to Him, before He allowed Satan to attack Job.

Job dignified, this trial by showing respect and honour to God during the trial.

**Job 2:7-10** [NIV] *“So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. **Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.**”*

Job accepted the sovereignty of his Creator God, he knew that there was a purpose for the trial.

Job did not grumble when the trial came and allowed the trial to continue as long as God allowed it, never doubting the wisdom and perfect justice of God who allowed the trial.

Remember Job’s trial was only for a limited period, it was not endless.

**Job 42:10-13** [NIV] *“After Job had prayed for his friends, **the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.** All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters.”*

Because Job dignified the trial God blessed him far more than ever before in his life.

Job’s trial brought him closer to the Creator God and our trials can do the same thing if we dignify them.

**How then do we resist temptation?**

**Let us reflect on what we have learnt.**

1. Remember that we alone are responsible for our own temptations.

Don’t try to pass the responsibility on to God or other people.

2. Remember that a trial or temptation is a unique opportunity to show God how much He matters to us.

We don’t really prove how much we love God by our worship or our love for the Bible or theology.

We prove our love for God by saying no to temptation, and by continuing to honour God in a trial.

3. Consider the consequences of giving in to a temptation.

The sorry that the sin will bring.

**2 Samuel 12:10-14** [NIV] *“Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.” “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’” Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”*

The very painful end results of David giving in to the temptation and committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband.

4. Make no provision for our human nature.

**Romans 13:13-14** [NIV] *“Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and **do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**”*

The best way to avoid sinning is to avoid the temptation.

Most of us have a fairly shrewd idea of what will tempt us, and we act foolishly if we go where we know we will be tempted.

5. Take “preventative medicine” all the time.

How much time do we spend in prayer?

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** [NIV] *“pray continually;”*

Prayer is **not** just something we do formally on our knees at certain times or in certain places.

Prayer is sharing all the events of every day with our Creator God.

Study of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is essential every day. Allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into a deeper understanding of the very mind of our Creator God.

Avoid people and circumstances which you know will tempt you to sin.

Involve yourself in some voluntary work that brings joy and hope to other people who are facing trials in their lives.

So many people today face the trial of loneliness.

6. Be aware of Satan’s devices, his schemes to cause you to give in to temptation and sin.

Satan tries to make us doubt God’s promises that He has made in the scriptures of the Christian Bible.

Both promises of blessings and curses!

Satan’s downfall was his pride.

**Ezekiel 28:15, 17** [NIV] *“You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.” ... “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.”*

Satan will appeal to our pride, our reputation, self-esteem and desire for prestige.

Many sexual temptations are the result of pride. Satan will use a need to be seen desirable or to relieve loneliness and self-pity, to tempt us to gratify these emotions with sexual activity outside of marriage.

Satan will use the deep hurt that comes from being treated unfairly to cause us to sin.

Making us feel we are justified in our resentment.

Remember that temptations will always appear to be “*providential.*”

### **Conclusion**

It is **not** a sin to be tempted.

Remember all temptations are resistible.

Aim to reduce all temptations to the level of mere suggestions that can be easily rejected.