

Is God Responsible For Our  
*Temptations?*

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Matt. 6:13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Sometime ago a prominent Bishop made the statement that it took him thirty-four years to appreciate and understand the real significance of this petition. I am frank to confess that it was the hardest for me to understand of any of the petitions found in this prayer. For a long time I puzzled over it, and could not appreciate it as I should. I remembered that in James 1:13, 14 we are told, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with *evil*, *neither tempteth he any man*; But every man is tempted, when he is drawn of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Now, in this passage in James we are emphatically told that God is not responsible for our temptations, but in this petition it would seem to imply that God is responsible for our temptations, and that we have to be constantly praying to God not to lead us into temptations. Here we would seem to have a contradiction, but I am convinced that the Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and it does not contradict itself when properly understood. Really to appreciate the rich significance of this petition, there are several things that we must have clearly fixed in our minds.

1. *We must recognize that temptation is necessary for the development of Christian character.*

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Without temptation we could never develop the kind of character that God wants us to have. It is only by meeting temptation and wrestling with it and overcoming it, that we grow and develop. This leads us to see that temptation is absolutely necessary for the development of Christian character; without it we could never be what God wants us to be.

When it came time for God to create man, He of course had the power and authority to create him in any way He saw fit. If God had so desired He could have created man so that he would have been governed by his instincts like the other animals, and he would instinctively have done the right thing at all times. However, if God had created man that way then there would have been no virtue in doing the right thing. There is no virtue in doing a thing you have to do. We do not give the animals of the field any credit for doing the things they do, for we know they have no moral choice in the matter. God saw fit to create man differently, because He wanted some creatures in His universe that would serve Him not because they had to, but because they wanted to. In doing this He took a great risk and threw great responsibility on us. He has given us the power and privilege of choosing between right and wrong. We can either accept the bad and reject the good, or we can choose the good and reject the bad. In every such choice as that we show to God and to the world that we serve God, not because we must, but because it is our desire, and in every such choice there is moral worth and significance.

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To my mind, this is one place where our good friends, who teach unconditional security, go astray. They virtually teach that when a person is converted that their probation ends and that the whole thing is now in the hands of God. They virtually teach that by one choice of the will you can put yourself where it is impossible for you to do anything that will change your eternal destiny. They virtually make probation to end at conversion. We do not believe that probation ends at conversion, but we believe it ends at death. - We believe that there is not only that initial choice that must be made at the time of conversion, but there are many other choices that must be made along the way. We also believe that enough wrong choices can be made along the way to cancel out that first choice.

The truth of the matter is, that Satan and the world don't really believe we are serious when we make that first choice that brings us into the Kingdom of God. Satan certainly does not believe that this ends the fight, for if he did he would give us up and give his time to working on people that he thought he could have a chance with. People may believe that they are so secure that they can never fall, but certainly Satan does not believe it, for he stays on the job and tempts us time after time. Many of the people of the world do not think we are eternally secure, for they will stand back and look on and say, "O, they are just excited, or carried away on a wave of emotion, and it will not be long until they will be back with us. They will soon be doing the same things they used to do," and

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they really expect us to do it. Sad to say many people do go back and do the very thing that Satan and the world expect them to do. However, if you really mean business, and do love the Lord, then when these temptations come, instead of going back you will stand true and just keep saying, "No, no, no." And if you keep saying that, and stand by it, you will prove to God and to the world that you are really sincere and mean business. In this way you will keep your stand with God, and prove that you love Him and serve Him not because you have to, but because you want to. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

In meeting these temptations and resisting them, you will find that you are growing and developing in your Christian life. The great saints of the past have been the ones that had the fiercest battles to fight and the strongest temptations to overcome. They became great and grew strong in fighting these battles and resisting these temptations. If you expect to be a strong, sturdy Christian you must expect to have some hard battles to fight and some fierce temptations to overcome. By fighting these battles and overcoming these temptations, you will grow and develop and become strong.

The way we develop our muscles is by using them. The more we use them the stronger they become. If you should place your right arm in a sling, and carry it across your breast for ten years the muscles in that arm would become so weak and flabby that you could

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not lift your hand to your face. It is by using the muscles that they grow and develop. That same thing is true with reference to our moral character.

Medical science has discovered that the human body is so constituted that when it is exposed to certain diseases, it not only is able to fight off that disease, but it builds up a resistance to, that particular disease. As an illustration: You may go to a doctor and let him inject a few thousand smallpox germs into your blood stream. Immediately the body would begin to battle those germs and eventually it would not only destroy the germs, but it would also build up such a resistance to that particular germ that you will become immune to that disease. I like to think of it in that way sometimes with reference to sin. Here in this world we are constantly being exposed to the disease of sin, but by the grace of God and the use of our own will power we are able to overcome these attacks. In the battle with the disease we are not only able to fight off the disease, but by the grace and help of God we are building up a power of resistance until one of these days, thank God, we will become immune to the disease of sin. In heaven God is going to have a whole race of people that will be immune to sin. Thank God, the disease will never break out in heaven, and it is here and now that we are building up our power of resistance to this awful malady.

Psychologists are teaching us that each time you resist a temptation it becomes easier to resist it the next

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time, but each time you succumb to temptation it becomes easier to yield the next time. That is why it is such folly for people to say, "O, I can drink or let it alone!" There is a time in the life of every person when this is true, but if you continue to drink there will come a time when you can drink, but can't let it alone. There are thousands of people that are finding this out by sad experience. There are thousands of people today that are slaves to such appetites, and they can't break away from them. They have become enslaved to their own lusts. The only hope for them is a miracle of divine grace. Thank God! the Lord can deliver you, no matter how much you may be enslaved. There is power in the blood to break the strongest shackles and set the captive free.

I know by my own experience, that there were many things in my early Christian life that made strong appeals to me. In fact, it looked sometimes as if I would not be able to resist them. I would have to fight and wrestle with them. However, I soon began to see that every time I overcame them that it was easier the next time to say, "No." Some of those very things that used to have such a strong appeal for me have lost their appeal altogether. I have no battle with them at all. In fact, some of those things that used to appeal to me, I have come to loathe them now. I do not mean to imply that Satan has given me up and now leaves me alone. No, by no means is this true. He never gives any of us up until our probation ends. He will work as

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long as he has any hopes or prospects of getting us back into his clutches. He never gives up, but thank God, we can get to the place where his bait does not appeal to us. We can come to the place where we hate sin and love righteousness. We can get to the place where it will be a joy to say "No" to the devil and "Yes" to God. We can get to the place where we delight to do His will, and we can get to the place where we will come to feel that holiness is the most beautiful thing in the world, and that sin is the ugliest thing in the world. However, we can't get to that place by toying with sin, and trifling with temptation. We must resist temptations and shun the very appearance of evil, but if we will do this we will find ourselves growing strong in the very midst of the battle. We will come to realize that it is by being tempted, and overcoming temptation, that we are able to grow and develop in our Christian character.

*2. We must come to see that there is a difference between being tempted and yielding to temptation.*

If we are to appreciate this text we must clearly recognize that there is a vast difference between being tempted and yielding to temptation. We must see that just because we are tempted is no indication that we are committing sin. A great many good people have never come to make this distinction in their thinking. In fact, many ministers and religious teachers seemingly have never come to see this difference. If they would see this difference, and make this distinction in their thinking, they would cut out so much talk about

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sinning every day in thought. I want to say emphatically that you don't have to sin every day in thought. You may have, and no doubt will have, many thoughts every day about sin, but there is a vast difference between thinking about sin, and sinning every day in thought. I can think about smallpox, but that does not mean that I have to take smallpox. The same thing is true with reference to thinking about sin. It would be hard to live in this world and not think about sin. In fact, Jesus had to think about sin many times each day, but that does not mean that He committed sin when He thought of it. Many people have the foolish, unscriptural idea that every time they think about sin, that they have sinned in thought.

Many times, when I preach on sanctification, and tell people that they can have their hearts cleansed from all sin, some one will speak up and say, "O, if that should happen to a person then they would never have any more temptations." How in the world people could get such an idea as that I can't see to save my life. According to the teaching of the Bible Adam was created in the image of God. He was holy and without sin when he was first created. He did not have a carnal or sinful nature in him, such as we are born with, but he did have temptation. The reason He had temptation was because He was human and had a human nature. His temptation did not come from an evil nature within, but it came from without through the suggestion of the mind and through the natural

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desires of the body. Certainly Jesus did not have any carnal, or sinful nature in Him, but He did have a human nature and because of that He had temptation. His temptation did not come from any carnal or sinful nature, but it came from without through His human nature. It came to Him through the suggestion of the mind and through the natural appetites of the human body. We are told that He was tempted in all points, like as we are, and yet without sin. This certainly proves that it is not a sin to be tempted. You can be tempted without committing sin. At least, Jesus was tempted again and again, and yet He never sinned. Of course a sanctified person will be tempted just as Adam and Jesus were tempted. Their temptations will not come from their carnal nature, but they will come to them through the suggestions of the mind and the natural appetites of the human body. It seems that any one should be able to see this, and yet many good, intelligent people seemingly have never come to see this truth, and are terribly mixed up in their thinking along this line. I hope the Lord will be able to use this little message to get some person straightened out in his thinking along this line.

I fear that many people have never been able to see the real significance of that statement Jesus made in Matt. 5:28, where He says, "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart." Many people seem to think that what Jesus is really saying in this passage is this: if a man is walking down the street,

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and sees a beautiful woman and has a thought about lust flash into his mind, that he has by that committed adultery with that woman in his heart. That is not what Jesus is saying at all. I want to especially call your attention to that part that says, "*to lust after*." Now, that literally means to *cherish* lustful thoughts. It means to take them in and harbor them, and roll them as a sweet morsel under your tongue, to dwell upon them until they become a part of your deepest desires. You may even go so far as to make them a part of your plans and purposes. Now, if you do that then, of course you are becoming impure in your thinking and have committed adultery in your heart. However, if when that thought flashes into your mind, you immediately recognize it as an evil thing, and push it out and refuse to give it room in your mind and heart, then you have not committed adultery in your heart. In fact, instead of sinning you have really gained the victory, and have grown stronger. It is not a sin to have a thought about evil flash into your mind, but it may become sin if you harbor it. I fear that a great many people have never really caught what James says along this line in the passage that I quoted in the beginning of this message. When you study this passage in James 1:14 you will find that he says, "But every man is *tempted*, when he is led away of his own lust, and *enticed*." That word *lust* really means *desire*. We usually think of the word lust as an evil, base thing, but in many cases in the Bible it really means *desire*. Paul says that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, *and*

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*the Spirit against the flesh.* Now, certainly the Spirit is not guilty of evil passions. So, we see that James is saying that a man is *tempted* when he is drawn away of his own desires. Notice that he does not say that he *has sinned*. He says he is *tempted*. Sin has not entered in yet. The man is now wrestling with the temptations that come from his *desires*. By these desires he is tempted and *enticed*. He has the devil teasing at him now and trying to get him to sin, but it has not yet become sin, for James says in the next statement, "*Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.*" Note that word, "*then.*" The man has not sinned when he has desired sin; that comes later. I also want you to notice the significant expression that he uses next. He says, "*When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.*" This expression "*conceived*" is a very striking and suggestive one. It is like a woman becoming pregnant, and after she has gone through the period of pregnancy, then she brings forth. James says that is the way sin comes into being. The desire plants the seed in the mind, and if it finds fertile soil, and is given the proper ground in which to grow, it will germinate, and will finally *bring forth sin*, but the temptation is not sin. The germ can be killed in the stage of temptation, and never conceive, and bring forth death. Truly the Bible is a wonderful book. It is so rich and meaningful when properly read and understood.

Mrs. Church and I have a very good friend in Washington, Pa. She is an evangelist and a fine preacher. She is red-headed and Irish, and when you get that

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combination you usually get something original and unique. Some years ago I heard this lady talking to some young people, and she was trying to get them to see the difference between being tempted and yielding to temptation. She put it in this way: "Young people, you cannot help it if the devil brings his brats and puts them on your front porch, but, thank God, you don't have to take them in and rear them for him." I never would have thought of putting it in just that way, but I think this is a fine distinction to make. It is true that Satan will come, and place certain suggestions and even desires on our front porch, but it is our business to slam the door in his face and refuse to take them in. We must say "No," to those suggestions and desires, and if we do say "No," then we have not sinned. The truth of the matter is we have gained a great victory and have grown stronger in our Christian lives.

Of course the devil is a very persistent fellow and does not give up so easily. He does not give up as readily as some of us do. We may slam the front door in his face and then he will come around to the back door. We may slam it in his face and he may try to drop the temptation down the chimney. He may then toss it in the window. He just keeps coming back again and again. We must just keep saying "No" again and again.

In fact, the best way to get rid of thoughts about evil is to have your mind so full of thoughts about good that you don't have time or room for thoughts about evil. That old saying, "An idle brain is the

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devil's workshop," has a great deal of truth in it, even though it is not in the Bible. It is true you are going to think about something. You will either think about pure and holy things or you will think about sin and unholy things. It is up to you to decide which you will entertain in your mind.

Next to the heart, the human mind is the most active thing about us. According to medical science the average human heart beats about seventy-two times a minute. Each time it beats it pumps between five and six ounces of blood out through the human system. In a period of twenty-four hours the average human heart will pump nineteen tons of blood out into the body. Your heart never stops to rest. It beats even while you are asleep. When your heart quits beating then your life will come to an end. Next to your heart the mind is the most active part about you. The human mind is a wonderful thing. It is amazing how active it can be. You can sit there in your seat and your mind can flit around the world and visit every city known to you. You can make a trip of thousands of miles in your imagination and never move out of your seat or lift a hand. That is one of the cheapest and most convenient ways of traveling. It beats the jet plane a mile. Your mind is seldom ever still. Even when you sleep you dream and many times your mind will solve problems for you while your body is resting in sleep. Your mind is going to think on something. It refuses to be a vacuum. If it does not think on good things, then it will think on bad things. It is yours to decide

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what your mind shall dwell upon. Your soul is the master of your mind and you can compel it to think on the things you want it to think about. You can call it back from its wanderings and command it to think as you want it to. What you think, that you will eventually become. That is why it is so important to be careful about what you read and what you listen to. Don't make your mind a garbage can for filth. Be careful about the books you read, and the kind of talk you listen to, for they are making an indelible impression on your mind. I have heard dirty stories in my youth that I would give most anything if I had never heard them. Sometimes they bob up into my conscious mind at the very time when I want to think about holy things. I have to force them down and refuse to give them audience. We must learn to control our thinking as well as our actions. If we don't control them they will lead us into sin. The thoughts within themselves are not sin, but when they conceive they bring forth sin. Be careful of your thinking. The devil can get in that door so easily.

Sometime ago I was in a hardware store in my home city. There is a clerk who works in that store, who is a good friend of mine. In fact, I went to school with his two sons. Usually when I go into this store on business this clerk wants to talk religion to me. He usually has some question to ask or some passage of Scripture to discuss. At the time of which I speak he told me about another minister that had been in the store a few days before this. While this minister was

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in the store some of the men were loading some barbed wire on an elevator. They seemed to be having some trouble with it. The minister stood and watched them, and finally said, "Now, fellows, I know what you are thinking. You are thinking D-, and you just as well say it as to think it." This clerk told me of this incident and then asked me what I thought of this minister's statement. I told him I thought it was one of the most ridiculous statements that I had ever heard of an intelligent man making. Why, the very idea! That is preposterous! You had just as well say it as to think it! You had just as well do it as to think it! Yet you can find many people that have the same foolish idea. They will tell you that you had just as well say a thing as to think it. They contend that you had just as well do it as to think it. Just suppose you said everything you thought! Just suppose you did everything that popped into your mind. You would soon be as crazy as a loon. It would not be long until they would have you in the insane asylum. Satan can suggest the most foolish ideas to your mind. He can suggest the most ridiculous things to your mind. If you did everything that popped into your mind you would be looked upon as insane. Satan has suggested the wildest kind of ideas to people's minds, and many of them actually thought they were from the Lord. Some people have followed these suggestions and have gone off into the worst sort of fanaticism. Don't do everything the devil suggests to your mind. Try the spirits and see whether they are of God. God never leads a person to do anything

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that is contrary to the teachings of the Bible. God never does lead a person to do anything that is indecent or contrary to common sense. God never leads a person to do a thing that would bring reproach on the truth. I have a friend who had a nervous breakdown some years ago, and he told me that the devil hounded him day after day trying to get him to take his own life. Suppose that man had gone by this idea that you had just as well do it as to think it. There would be a dead preacher today, and the cause of Christ would have been hurt. There are many people that cannot get up high and look down without having a strong urge to leap. In fact, I firmly believe people have ended their lives in that way, and they did not intend to do it. If they would have just stepped back and taken the second thought they would be alive today. No, don't say everything that comes into your mind. Don't do everything the devil suggests. Just remember that one of the ways the devil has of tempting people is through the suggestions of the mind. Take time to think about it and see if it is of God. Don't let the devil rush you into doing something that will hurt you and the cause of Christ. God always gives people time to find out if it is the leading of the Spirit. One sure sign that a suggestion is of the devil is the fact that he will try to rush you into doing something right now. He wants to hurry you and get you to do something that you will be ashamed of later. If you are in doubt, then hold steady and wait on God. He will give you time to know that he is leading.

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As I have already said, Satan does suggest all kinds of ideas to your mind. It is up to you to decide what you are going to do about them. If they are temptations then they will not become sin until you have made your choice.

Sin is an act of the will. It is not an involuntary action. It is a transgression of the law. Some months ago I was holding a revival in Ohio. A lady who was passing through a very critical period of her life, began attending that meeting. She was very nervous and emotionally upset. While she was in this mental condition she had gone to hear another evangelist preach. It happened that she heard him preach one night on the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. In the course of his sermon he made the statement that the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit was for a person to wilfully, deliberately, and maliciously attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil. Satan took that definition and sealed it to the mind of that woman. She went home, and then the next day Satan suggested blasphemous thoughts to her mind, and then stepped back and began to taunt her. He said, "Now, there you have committed the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. You thought that, and God knows what is in your mind and heart. You have committed the unpardonable sin. There is no hope for you." That woman was nearly crazy with fear. In fact, I believe she would have lost her mind, if she had not received some help from some one. As she told me about this experience I looked at her and said, "Sister, you overlooked three very vital and important words in that man's definition. You

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overlooked the words wilfully, *deliberately*, and maliciously. Now, Sister, let me ask you some questions. Do you hate God and His Spirit? Do you want to deliberately grieve God and drive the Holy Spirit from your heart? Would you deliberately do something that would insult and grieve the Holy Spirit? Do you have malice in your heart against God and His Holy Spirit?" She looked at me with a hurt look in her eyes and on her face and said, "No, Brother Church, I love God. I want the Holy Spirit with me always. It has nearly driven me crazy to think that I had done something to hurt God and insult the Holy Spirit. I had rather die than to do such a thing." Then I said to her, "Sister, I have some good news for you. If you are really telling me the truth about how you feel about God, and I am ready to believe that you are telling the truth, then I am happy to inform you that those were not really your thoughts. Those were the devil's thoughts, and he was just trying to get you to adopt them and make them yours, but all the time your heart was set against it. Can't you see that you could not be guilty of such an awful sin by just having such thoughts flash into your mind? You cannot be loving God and wanting the Holy Spirit and still be guilty of such a sin. Before you could commit such a sin as that you would have to change your attitude toward God." The light broke on her face, and she looked as if a mountain had rolled off her. Can't you see, my dear reader, that it is the attitude of the heart that is going to determine how anything will affect us? Man looks on the outward ap-

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pearance, but God looks on the heart. When God looks down into your soul, and sees there perfect love toward Him, He is not going to consign your soul to hell for some thought that might flash into your mind at some unguarded moment.

For the past seven years I have been working on a sermon on faith. I have never felt free to preach it yet. I hope sometime that God will let me preach it. If I ever do try to preach that sermon one thing that I especially want to bring out is this: I want to try to get people to see that real, living, saving faith, the kind of faith that makes you a Christian and the kind that keeps you in the hands of Jesus, is not just a thing of the head; it is not just believing something with your mind. The real faith of which I speak is *of the heart*. "It is with the heart man believeth unto *righteousness*." That is why you have to repent in order to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation. You may believe with your mind without repentance, but you cannot believe with the heart unless you repent of your sins. No man can really believe on Christ for salvation when he is holding on to sin at the same time. No man can continue to believe in Christ with his heart when he is doing the very thing that put Christ to death. You may believe with the head and live in sin, but you cannot believe with the heart and live in sin. It is only faith that is of the heart that makes and keeps you a Christian. It is a faith that moves the will and touches the deepest emotions of a man. This is the kind of faith that is real. This kind will bring you into the Kingdom

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and *this kind will keep you in*, but it is the only kind that will.

Now, a person may believe with his heart even when he has doubts, questions, and fears in his mind. Many people do this very thing. As an illustration of what I am trying to say, let us just imagine a boy cut yonder in a fox-hole. Shells are bursting all about him. Death and destruction are on every hand, and he is really frightened. His teeth are chattering. His knees are knocking together. He is really afraid, but deep down in his heart he says, "I will not be a coward. I will not show a yellow streak or the white feather. I may get killed, and no doubt I will, but I am going to be a true soldier." In spite of his fears he crawls out of that fox-hole and charges the enemy and proves to be a hero. Now, friends, I submit to you that that fellow really is a hero. It takes a lot more courage for a fellow to do a thing like that when he is frightened nearly to death, than it does for a fellow that knows nothing of fear. That same thing is true about this matter of trusting Jesus. It takes a lot more faith and determination for a person to hold on and trust Jesus when his mind is still filled with doubts and fears, than it does for a person who has no doubts and questions. Job had his questions and doubts. He looked for God before and behind. He looked for Him on the right hand and on the left, and could not find Him, but in spite of all this he said, "As long as the Lord gives me breath I will trust Him. Though He slay me yet will I trust Him." That kind of faith will take you through.

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It is the devil's business to try and get you to doubt and cast away your confidence. He realizes that if he can get you to doubt, and throw up your hands in despair, then he has you at his mercy. Faith is the vital breath of the Christian life. Faith is the channel through which the grace and power of God flow into your soul. If you lose your faith you cease to live and breathe. If you give up your trust in Christ you have blocked the channel through which divine life flows into your soul. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We are justified by faith. We are sanctified by faith. We live by faith. Jesus said, "He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life." That word, *believeth*, is in the *present*, active, *tense*, just like the word *hath*. That means it is something that must continue to go on all the time. It is not something we do once and forever, but it is a continuous thing. So long as we believe we have everlasting life, but when we cease to believe we cease to have everlasting life. We are kept by the power of God through *faith*. Our faith is just as important in our being kept as the power of God. Without faith the power of God cannot function in our soul. Just as we are saved by grace *through faith*. There is plenty of grace for everyone to be saved, but many are not saved, and the reason they are not saved is because they will not exercise the faith. Just as faith is necessary for us to be saved, so *it is necessary for us to be kept. This is the victory* that overcometh

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the world, *even our faith*. You cannot overcome the world unless you hold on to Christ by faith. "If any man draw back my soul will have no pleasure in him. Cast not away therefore thy confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." If you will trust, and never doubt, He will surely bring you out.

Since faith does play such a vital part in our Christian life, then of course the devil will do everything he can to get us to give up and cast away our confidence. Sad to say many have done this very thing. In fact, many people have never really come to see that the temptation to doubt is one of the most effective tools of the devil. Many people have never even considered doubts as temptations and a tool of the devil. You talk to the average person about temptation and immediately they begin to think about being tempted to get drunk, lie, curse, steal, or such things as that. However, we need to see that the most subtle tool of the devil is to get the Christian to doubt. It is no temptation to me to get drunk, lie, steal, commit adultery, and such gross sins as that. I hate such things as that. However, you don't need to get the idea that Satan does not tempt me with doubts.

A great many people have the mistaken idea that the minister does not have any temptations. They seem to think that he just lives on the mountain top all the time, but that is not true. The minister has his battles just like anyone else. Satan often goes home with me, and gets in the bed with me. He talks to me and says, "You don't have the blessing and power

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of God in your life. If you did you would be able to accomplish a great deal more than you are doing." Especially is this true when I get in a hard meeting and pour out my heart and can't get results. When I have done everything I know how, and then can't get a move of any kind, the devil comes and tries to get me to believe that I have leaked out and lost the power. I find that I am not the only one that he talks to like that. I find that he talks to other people along the same line. He will come to some good Christian woman and try to get her to believe that she does not have the blessing just because she can't win her godless husband or children for Christ. He will talk that way to parents because they can't win their children. He talks that way to Sunday school teachers because they have tried to win their pupils for Christ and have failed. When he talks like that to us, we just have to take our stand on the word of God and what He has done for us. When he begins to talk to me like that I use the word of God on him. I remind him that the Bible says the altar sanctifies the gift, and that I am all on the altar. This is true whether I feel like shouting or not. *It is true because God says it is true.* I can stand on the word of God when all around my soul gives way. In fact, Heb. 11:1 says, "Now faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen." The Greek word that is translated *substance* is, *huptostasis*, and the literal meaning of it is *the title deed*. In other words, *your faith is the deed to your eternal inheritance.* You may never have seen the

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inheritance but you have the deed to it. Whatever you do, don't lose the deed. Hold on to it.

In speaking of this matter of power I want to say that I am convinced in my own mind that we need to do some re-thinking on this matter of power. Too many people have entirely the wrong idea about the power of the Holy Spirit. You talk to the average person about the power of the Holy Spirit, and the first thing they think of is the sound of rushing mighty winds, cloven tongues like fire sitting on peoples' heads, and some great physical manifestation. They think this is the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not the power, but it is just a by-product of the power. It is somewhat like the steam that we see coming from the pop-off valve on an engine. The steam that we see coming from that valve on the great engine is not the real power. The real power is down there in the boiler, ready to drive those great pistons and send that train forward. The real power of Pentecost was the power that made men holy, and gave them the courage to witness for Christ. It was that something that made them rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ. It was that power that made them sing and pray at midnight, when their feet and hands were in the stocks. It was that power that gave them peace when they were dying as martyrs for the cause. This is the kind of power we need today. I have come to see that it is not my responsibility to get results. O, of course, I like to see visible results and rejoice when God gives them, but after all, my business is to preach

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the truth in the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, and it is God's business to give the results. God does give results. We may not know about it, but His word does not return unto Him void. It accomplishes His purpose in the thing whereunto He sent it. It is a great comfort to me to know that this is true. It keeps me calm in my soul when the battle gets hard. God gives us enough visible results to keep us encouraged and plugging away for Him. If He let us know all we were accomplishing for Him it might give us the big-head.

Sometime ago a young fellow came to me and said, "Brother Church, is it really true that Chas. G. Finney had so much power on him, that he went into a factory one day and just stood there, and people began to get under conviction, and they had to close the factory down?" I said, "Yes, according to the records that really happened one time." Then he said to me, "I want you to pray for me that I will have that same *kind* of power." I said to him, "Brother, while we are at it let's pray that I may get it too." Then I said, "Now, listen, brother, while it is true chat did happen one time with Chas. G. Finney, yet we need to remember that Mr. Finney walked into a lot of other places and nobody paid any attention to his being there. While it is true that the early church prayed one time and the place was shaken, they also prayed a lot of other times and the place was not shaken. While it is true that Paul and Silas did pray and sing one night and they had an earthquake, yet we need to remember that Paul died in jail."

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We need to remember that those early Christians were filled with the Holy Ghost just as much when those great physical signs were not taking place as they were when they did take place. Those things were taking place because God saw fit to give such demonstrations at that time, but the Holy Ghost came to abide.

We are told that when Moses came down from the mountain that the skin of his face did shine, but he wist not that this was taking place. The people could see the glory on him, and had to go and ask him to put a veil on, for they could not stand to look at him. He was not conscious of this glory. The same thing may be true with us today, and no doubt it is true with many of God's children. There are many of God's saints who are going about today with the glory of heaven on their lives, but they are not conscious of it. Other people see it, and are led to believe in the reality of holiness and get hungry for the blessing, but the saint goes on his way, and perhaps at that very time the devil is trying to get him to believe he does not have the blessing.

One of the greatest troubles with many of us is the fact that we have never come to see the difference between the constant *abiding presence* of the Holy Ghost, and the *manifestations* of the Holy Ghost. Jesus mentions both of them in John 14th chapter. In one place He says, "He will *abide with you forever*," but in another place he says, "I will *manifest myself unto you*." Many people have the mistaken idea that He can't abide without manifesting Himself all the time.

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In fact, most of us want to live on physical manifestations all the time. If the Lord is not blessing us all the time we think we don't have anything. We need to see that He came to abide forever, but He doesn't manifest Himself all the time. He just gives us manifestations as we need them and as He sees fit. He wants us to learn to walk by faith and not by sight.

We used to have two sons at our house, but we have only one with us now. Some years ago our youngest son went home to be with Jesus. When he was twelve years of age he was stricken with tumor of the brain. They brought him home from school one Thursday afternoon totally blind. On Saturday he had a stroke that paralyzed his left side, and then later on he had another stroke that paralyzed his throat muscles. He was an invalid for five years before he finally went home. While he was in that helpless condition Mrs. Church and I let him sleep in the room where we slept, so that he could be close to her, and she could look after him. During those years that he was an invalid I would hold a lot of meetings in my own state. Many times when I would get through with the service at night I would be homesick to see my wife and boys, and would get in my car and drive home. Sometimes it would be very late when I would reach home. While the boy was still alive I would always go in as quietly as possible. I did not want to disturb him. Mrs. Church would come to the kitchen door and let me in. I would pull off my shoes in the kitchen and go to the bath room and prepare for bed. I would even pray in the bath room. I

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would slip into the bedroom and get in bed as quietly as possible so as not to wake him. When I was in bed I was so close to him that I could reach out and touch him. Now I was abiding with him, but I did not manifest myself to him. The next morning when he would awake then we would have quite a manifestation. Sometimes I would go over and get in the bed with him, or I would get him and bring him over in the bed with me, and we would make love to each other and talk. We had some real manifestations then. However, I had been abiding with him long before that Now, if the house had caught on fire during the night, or if a burglar had broken in, or if he had taken sick during the night, then I would have manifested myself to him, but he did not need any manifestation and so I did not give him any. The same thing is true with the Lord and us. He abides all the time. He came to abide forever. He will manifest Himself when we need it, but He abides all the time. You do not lose the Holy Ghost in your sleep. You may lose the shout in your sleep. You may go to bed shouting happy and get up in the morning with a splitting headache, but the Holy Ghost abides forever. He is not going to slip off and leave you when you are not looking. It is true that you can grieve Him and drive Him out of your life, but He is not going to just slip off and leave you. He wants to live in your soul. Learn to count on him whether you feel like shouting or not. He will give you the power you need and when you need it. He is not going to give you the power to preach or witness until the time

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comes to use that power. You may feel as weak as water and wonder how you will ever accomplish the task, but if you have Him, never worry, He will supply the power at the right time.

Our oldest son is a grown young man now and works on the farm while I am away. Since moving down to our little home we have done a lot of work on the place. We have chopped down trees, grubbed stumps, dug ditches, and built terraces. It has been a joy to work together. Usually, when I get ready to go off to a meeting he will say, "Dad, what do you want me to do this time while you are gone?" I will suggest some things that I would like for him to do, and then when I come home he wants to take me around and show me what he has done. He seems to take delight in doing things to please me. Sometime ago I had been away for a meeting and got home before they were expecting me. When I drove up in the yard I asked the lady who has lived with us for a number of years, "Where is John?" She informed me that he was down in the pasture grubbing up an old stump. I walked down the lane and saw him there hard at work. It was in the month of August and the sun was shining hot, but he was plugging away at the job. I stood and watched him for sometime without letting him know I was anywhere near. To be honest with you, I really had a wonderful time watching my son work. I felt that I was clipping some coupons on the investment that I had made in him. My heart was filled with joy and pride in my son. I said to myself, "Bless his heart,

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just look at him! He doesn't know I am here, but he is on the job. He is not out in sin or doing something that would bring reproach on me. I have a son that is faithful, and I don't have to be right with him all the time. He will be faithful whether I am standing over him or not." You have no idea the satisfaction it gave me. I think the same thing must be true of our Heavenly Father. I think it must give Him great joy and satisfaction to see His children set their face like a flint and say, "I am going through, yes, I am going through. I'll pay the price whatever others do. I'll take the way with the Lord's despised few. I am going through. Jesus, I am going through." If we will say that and really mean it He will take us through and bring us safely home at last.

Chas. G. Finney used to talk a lot about entering into a covenant relationship with God. I wish I could get that idea across to people today. I wish I could get them to see that when they are saved and sanctified by faith that they have entered into a covenant relationship with the God of this universe, and that the covenant will hold if they keep their part of the contract. It is a mutual agreement between them and God. He is not going to break His part of it, and will stand if we meet the conditions.

Abraham entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord. The Lord appeared to him and made some promises to him that were meant to stand. So far as I am able to learn from a study of the Bible it was fourteen years after this experience before God appeared to

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Abraham again. Think of it! Fourteen years without a shout or any physical manifestation from the Lord. Most of us would have been at the altar a dozen times in that length of time crying and begging God for some physical manifestation, but Abraham believed God and walked by faith and not by sight. He lived in the land and even bought a plot of ground to bury Sarah on, and yet did not have anything but the promise of God that his children would ever settle down and live there. He believed God would keep His promise and that lonely grave stood there for centuries as a testimony to the fact that there was one man that was willing to take God at His word. When the Children of Israel came into the land of Canaan they found that grave there. It had stood there as a monument to the fact that there was one man who was willing to build on the word of God. O, for a faith like that today! "O, for a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by every foe; a faith that will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe."

Satan will come and tempt you and try to lead you off into sin. He will try to get you to doubt and cast away your confidence, but hold on to God's unchanging hand and He will bring you through.

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### WE MUST HAVE SOME IDEA OF THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION

The third thing that we must keep in mind, if we are to appreciate the real meaning of this text is this: we must have some idea of just where and how temptations come to us. According to the teaching of the Bible there are three great sources of temptation in the life of a Christian.

(1) *Temptations come to the unsanctified through the carnal nature.*

The Bible teaches that sin is two-fold in its nature. We have not only sinned (the act), but the Bible teaches that there is a sin nature in us, that came to us as a result of the fall of Adam. The Bible teaches that every child born into this world is born with a sinful, depraved nature. Therefore, we not only need to be justified and have our sins blotted out, but we also need to be sanctified and be cleansed from that old sin nature that is in us. When we are regenerated our sins are forgiven and we are born into the Kingdom of God. We have had a new nature imparted to us, but we still have that old carnal nature in us. Unless something is done about it then we will be having a lot of trouble with it. Paul tells us that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would. Paul tells us in the 7th chapter of Romans that the things he would do he did not do, and the very things he would not do.

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those were the very things he did. He tells us that after the inward man he delighted to do the will of God, but he found in him another law that was contrary. It was the law of sin and death. The poet wrote, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love." This is the experience that is common to people who have been saved, but have not yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. James tells us that the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. This is true. The person who has been saved but has not had his heart cleansed from inbred sin will find that he lives an up and down life. Sometimes they are up and sometimes they are down, but still their soul is heavenly bound. They are striving with an evil nature in their own heart, that often defeats them, and leads them into things that they ought not to do, and after they have done them they are ashamed and repent of them with bitter remorse. There is a root of bitterness in them, and because of that they have the shoots of pride, envy, rebellion, and many other things spring up and trouble them. Many of them are defeated by this root of bitterness.

Now, unless you get rid of this sin nature that is in your heart you will be having trouble with it from time to time, and it will be a great source of temptation to you. It will be like the fifth columnist that steals in and betrays in some weak, unguarded moment. This was the thing that tripped David up and caused him to commit the awful sin that he committed. He recognized this fact and confessed, "Behold I was *shapen in iniqui-*

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ty, and in sin did my mother conceive me." In other words, I was born with something in me that made me want to do this awful thing. In his prayer he not only prayed that God would have mercy upon him and blot out his transgressions, but he also prayed that God would create within him a *pure heart* and renew a right spirit within him. In other words, he wanted God to fix him up this time so that he would not want to do such a thing again. There are many people that need to pray such a prayer as this. They have had their sins forgiven, but they need to have their hearts *cleansed from inbred sin*. They will never be able to live the life they ought to live until this happens.

Sad to say there are many good people who really believe that it is impossible to get rid of this evil nature so long as we live. They have the mistaken idea that they have to go through life wrestling with this thing until death. They oftentimes go back to the seventh chapter of Romans and quote what Paul says: "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that *dwelleth in me*. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." They quote this as if Paul meant to imply that he always lived like this, and that this was the best the gospel of Jesus Christ could do for a person. They seem to forget that Paul lived to get out into the eighth chapter of Romans and shouted, "For the law *of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sin-

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ful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh*: That the righteousness of the law might be *fulfilled in us*, (Note that expression "*in us*." It does not say *in Jesus Christ*. It is not something that takes place in heaven, but it takes place *in us*. This is not *imputed* righteousness. This is *imparted* righteousness. This is experiential righteousness) who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." They also seem to forget that Paul says to these same people in verse 9, "But ye *are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Here he is talking to people that are still living in a human body, but he tells them that they are *not in the flesh*. They have been delivered from that old fleshly nature that gave so much trouble (in the 7th chapter). It is too bad that so many people just insist on living in the 7th chapter of Romans when they could get into the 8th chapter, if they would only meet the conditions and accept the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If you will notice in the book of Romans the Holy Spirit is mentioned only one time in the whole book until you get to the 8th chapter. In the 5th chapter it tells us that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. This, of course, takes place at conversion, but this is the only place where the Holy Ghost is mentioned until you come to the 8th chapter. However, in the 8th chapter of Romans the Holy Ghost is mentioned 19 times in that one chapter. In other words, you are now looking at a Spirit-filled child of God, and because he is filled with the Spirit he has victory over this old sin nature. That old nature has

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been *crucified* and the Holy Ghost has taken up his abode, and because of this the believer lives a life of victory and power. You can get rid of that old nature and be rid of that conflict that has been going on in your own breast. Paul is pointing out to us that Jesus not only provides justification but He also provides sanctification. We may not only have our sins forgiven, but we can also have our hearts cleansed from that sin principle that we inherited. This is the gospel that Paul is preaching in the 8th chapter, and this is the kind of gospel we need.

A great many people seem to feel that this matter of sanctification is an elective course that can either be taken or left off. Many people seem to take the attitude that they have been saved and are getting along all right and that they don't need to press on into sanctification. This is not true for the Bible says, "*This is the will of God even your sanctification.*" God's will is not completed in justification; it is only begun. God wants us to go on to sanctification and be made holy. He chose this for us before the foundation of the world. "Jesus suffered without the gate that he might sanctify the people with *his own blood*. Not only does God want us to have it and calls us to it, but it is a dangerous thing for us to fail to press on into it. It was the carnal nature that caused David to steal into the home of Uriah and commit adultery with his wife, and then plot and scheme to have Uriah killed and get him out of the way, so that David could take Bathsheba as his wife. When I was a boy there were two fine men in

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our city that had been in business together for years. They had always gotten along just fine, but one day they got into an argument over some matter concerning their business. One of them flew into a rage and picked up a paper weight on the desk and hurled it at his partner. The weight struck his partner in the temple and he fell over dead. The paper weight had hardly struck the man until the one that had thrown it cried out and said, "My God, what made me do that!" It was carnality in his heart that made him do it. He had a sleeping monster in his own heart that leaped up and caused him to take his own brother's life.

The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to follow peace with all men, *and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* Notice that this is not imputed holiness. This is the kind of holiness that we are to *strive for*; that is what the word follow means. Then the writer gives us this solemn warning. "Looking diligently lest any man *fail of the grace of God*; lest any *root of bitterness springing up* trouble you, and *thereby many be defiled.*" If we do not follow after holiness then there will be a root of bitterness that will spring up and trouble us, and as a result of this root of bitterness many will be defiled. Many have been defiled. The writer gives us an illustration of this in the case of Esau. He tells us that Esau sold his birthright for a morsel and displeased the Lord. There have been many people that sold their birthright for as little as Esau. They did it for the same reason that Esau sold his. They had carnality in their heart. As long as you

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permit carnality to remain in your heart you have a traitor in your own breast that will betray you in some weak, unguarded moment. Paul says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in *sin* (the Greek has it *the sin*. Shall we continue on with *the sin in us*) that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to *the sin* live any longer therein? No, we can and should get rid of *the sin*. If you will let the Holy Ghost come and purge out that old sin nature you will then be done with this kind of temptation.

(2) *We will have temptation through our natural appetites.*

I have pointed out that we can get rid of the sin nature, that we inherited as the result of the fall of Adam, and we will be done with this particular form of temptation. We are still human, however, and have our natural desires. We are sanctified but *not petrified*. We are still human beings and have human desires. As I have already pointed out in this message, Adam did not have carnality. His temptations came not from his carnal nature but from without by the suggestion of the mind and through the natural desires of the body. Jesus did not have any carnal nature, but He did have a human nature. His temptations did not come from any carnal nature but through the suggestions of the mind and through the natural desires of His human nature. I really think that is what is meant when it says, that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are *yet without sin*. I think that statement, "*yet without sin*," really means *with the excep-*

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*tion of sin.* Jesus did not have the sin nature to contend with that we have. In every other point he was tempted just as we are. Of course we recognize that He did not commit sin, but I think the writer is meaning to say that Jesus had temptation just as we have with the exception of that which comes from the carnal nature. He did not have that to contend with. In the case of Adam we have an illustration of the fact that a person who has no carnal nature can be tempted and fall. In the case of Jesus we have an illustration of the fact that a person can be free of the carnal nature and live holy right here in this old world, and that he can live holy in a physical human body. This is very interesting for there are many people that believe that the human body is sinful and that you cannot live without sin while you live in this human body. Jesus showed to us that it could be done.

In fact, the teaching that the human body is sinful is not a scriptural teaching. It is true that Paul does use the term "flesh" in speaking of the carnal nature, but when he uses the term "flesh" in that sense he is not speaking of the human body, but he is speaking of that low, base, fleshly nature that sometimes manifests itself through the human desires and appetites. Paul also speaks of the mortal body. Certainly Paul does not teach that the human body is sinful; if he does then he certainly does contradict himself. In Romans 6:13 he says, "Neither yield ye your *members* as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God. as those that are alive from the

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dead, and *your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*" In the 19th verse of this same chapter he exhorts us to *yield our members as servants to righteousness unto holiness.* Then in Romans 12:1 he tells us, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present *your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,* which is your reasonable service." In I Cor. 3:16 he says, "Know ye not that *ye are the temple of God,* and that *the Spirit of God dwelleth* in you? If *any man defile* the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is *holy, which temple ye are,*" In II Cor. 4:10, 11, he tells us that we are "always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the *life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that *the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh.*" These with many other passages that could be quoted clearly show that the physical human body is not sinful. In fact, the body is not an agent. It is an instrument. We may either yield it unto Satan for sin or we may yield it unto God for righteousness unto holiness. The teaching that the physical human body is sinful is not a Christian teaching. It is a carry over from Gnosticism. It is the teaching of many heathen religions today, but it has no place in the Christian system. It seems strange that people could not see this. The Bible teaches that *sin comes from the heart.* Jesus said that it was out of the heart that evil proceeds. See Mark 7:21-23. In this passage He winds up with this

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statement: "All these evil things come *from within*, and *defile the man*." The same Christ that said this, also said, "Blessed are the *pure in heart* for they shall see God." Christ can cleanse the heart from all of this evil. If you will turn to Gal. 5:19-21 you will find that Paul gives a list of the works of the flesh. If you will study this list you will find that he gives a total of seventeen different things that he lists as the works of the flesh. Then, if you will study that list carefully you will find that *nine* of these works of the flesh have *to do with the heart*, and eight of them have to do with the body. It is true that carnality does oftentimes manifest itself through the physical human desires, but at other times it manifests itself through the attitudes of the spirit. In fact, Paul says the *carnal mind is enmity against God*. It is that rebellious thing in our heart that is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. That is the real seat of carnality. These things clearly indicate that the physical body is not sinful. Carnality lies deeper than that. Carnality is in the heart and will and they can be cleansed. This is a truth that we need to see clearly, for if we do not see it we will always be confused. The reason why so many people believe they cannot be sanctified until they die is because they have the mistaken idea that the physical body is vile and sinful, and therefore they think they cannot be cleansed from all sin until they die and get rid of the human body. If the human body is sinful then Jesus had carnality to contend with all his life. He took upon Him the form of *flesh*.

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The Word *became flesh* and dwelt among us. If people could see the difference between the carnal nature and the human nature it would do more to clear up this matter of sanctification and holiness than anything I know of. The fact that some people refuse to see the Bible teaching about the true nature of humanity has led to most of the confusion on this point.

Now, while the human body is not sinful yet it is weak, and is liable to sin. We will have many of our strongest temptations through that medium. Adam's temptation came through that channel. We are told that he looked at the fruit and saw that it was to be desired. Satan tempted him first of all through the suggestion of the mind, and then through the desire of the body, and Adam sinned. Jesus was tempted in the same way. He was hungry. He had fasted for forty days and nights, and naturally He was hungry. Satan came to Him and used that human hunger as a basis for His first temptation. He tempted Jesus just as he tempted Adam through the suggestion of the mind and the natural appetite of the body. That is the way he tempts a sanctified person today. As long as we live in this human body we will have such temptations as this. We will have to watch at this point, and as Paul says, we will have to keep under our bodies. We will have to learn how to mortify the deeds of the body. Paul says, "I keep under my *body*, lest after having preached the gospel to others, I myself should become a castaway." We will have to do the same thing if we expect to live a holy life and keep the blessing of God on our

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souls.

There are certain natural appetites that are not sinful, but they may lead to sin. They are God-given and are just as much a part of us as the color of our eyes or the shape of our head. They are an essential part of our humanity. Without them we would not be what God wants us to be. God will not take them away from us. We need them in this life. These natural desires are not sinful. They are natural and yet they may lead to sin. We will be tempted through these natural desires. It is not sinful to get hungry. It is as natural to get hungry as it is to breathe. You may eat to the glory of God just as much as you can sing or pray to the glory of God. It is by eating properly that we keep our bodies alive and fit for the service of God. Eating may be an act of worship. In fact, we do worship when we sit down to the table and partake of food. Now, while it is no sin to eat under the right conditions, yet we may eat too much or under the wrong circumstances and commit sin. We may eat too much and become a glutton. We may eat too much and wreck our health and destroy our effectiveness. We will have to watch that natural desire lest it lead us into sin. God will never take this desire from us as long as we live in these mortal bodies. We need that desire to keep us alive. In fact, Jesus ate even after He arose from the dead, and the Bible would seem to indicate that we will have some of these desires after we are resurrected and have our glorified bodies.

The sex desire is not a sinful desire. It is a nat-

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ural desire. It is as natural as the desire for food. The fact that you have it is no indication that you are a vile, low, base creature. It is an indication that you are a normal, natural human being just as God intended you should be. God will never take this desire from you as long as you live in this body. If God did take it away from you then you would not be as God intended you should be. Sad to say there are a great many people who have the mistaken idea that the sex desire is a vile, base desire and many of them think they are base and sinful just because they have this God-given natural desire. I wish so much that I could get people to see just what the Bible really teaches on this subject. The first command that God ever gave to the human race was to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth, and naturally this involved the indulgence of this sex desire. Certainly God would not command His creatures to do something that demanded of them doing a vile, sinful thing. If the sex desire is a sinful thing then God has created one of the worst things in the world for all the animal creation indulge in this act. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, everywhere you turn you see the creatures that God created indulging in it without any shame or restraint. God has put the sex urge in us and has made it strong so we would mate and produce. It is one of the strongest urges in love and marriage, and when indulged in properly may be one of the most beautiful things that exists between a man and his wife. This relationship can be sanctified and become a holy thing. In the 5<sup>th</sup>

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chapter of Genesis we are told that Enoch *walked with God and begat sons and daughters*. His walking with God did not hinder him begetting sons and daughters, and his begetting sons and daughters did not hinder his walk with God. They were perfectly compatible. In fact, some of the greatest saints that the world has ever known had large families of children. Susanna Wesley had nineteen children. Parenthood is in response to a divine command and is one of the most precious things in this world. In Hebrew 13:4 we are told, "Marriage is *honorable* in all, and the *bed undefiled*." Paul deals with this question in a very frank manner in writing to the church at Corinth, and it would be well for us to see and understand just what he says on this subject. If we would listen to him instead of some crackpot preachers that are going up and down the country spouting off their own perverted ideas we would be much better off. Some preachers have gone out and preached their own ideas that were unscriptural and foolish, and have broken up homes and wrecked lives. I met a fine lady some years ago and she had a fine son. I was told by one of her friends that her home had been broken up because some fanatical preacher had led her to believe that she was not to indulge the sex desire unless it was for the express purpose of bringing children into the world. She had believed the preacher instead of finding out what the Bible taught on the subject, and her husband had become disgusted and had left her. There was a home broken up, and no doubt the man's life was blighted,

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just because some preacher went off a tangent and preached his own foolish opinions instead of preaching the word of God. I have had man after man come to me and confess to the awful conflict that was going on in his own home just because his wife had gotten the wrong idea about sex relationship, and had come to feel that it was a low, base, vile thing. Now, in view of all the false teaching and the misunderstanding of so many people on this subject let us go to the word of God and see what it has to say on the subject. In I Cor. 7:2-5, we will find a very thorough, plain, and very suggestive discussion on the whole matter. Paul says, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. *The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourself to prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*"

It seems to me that this is as clear and plain as a person could make it without being immodest and crude. Paul is saying that when a woman gives herself in marriage to a man that *she give her body to him* and she no longer has power over her own body. If a woman is not willing to do this then she ought to remain single. She has no right to shirk her vows along this line and just use a man for a meal ticket. He also says

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that when a man marries a woman that *he gives his body to the woman* and that he no longer has power over it. He now belongs to his wife and she has certain claims upon him along this line. He has no right to go off and give himself in sex indulgence with some other woman. *He belongs to his wife in this respect.* Paul also tells us that the husband and wife *are not to deny each other along this line.* In fact, he uses even stronger language than this. He says, "*Defraud ye not one the other.*" To defraud is to cheat or take something that does not belong to you. Paul says that they may agree to abstain for a season for the purpose of giving themselves to prayer, but that it is not to be for too long a period of time, lest they be tempted and fall into sin.

Now this is very clear and plain so that anyone can readily understand it, and just remember this is not what I think about it, but *this is what God's word teaches on the subject.* If people would follow this instruction instead of the foolish opinions of people they would be much better off and would be saved of many heart aches. If people had followed the Bible in its teaching along this line no doubt there are many homes that would be happy instead of being rent and torn by strife and discord or being broken by divorce. Lives have been wrecked, homes have been broken, and children have been blighted just because many people have had an unscriptural attitude about the sex urge.

I recognize that this is a very delicate subject and should be dealt with in a delicate manner. The rela-

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tionship between a man and his wife is too beautiful and sacred to be discussed like the weather, or some other commonplace topic, and yet we do need to be instructed along this line. Many parents have taken a prudish attitude toward this matter, and have refused to discuss it with their sons and daughters. In fact, many times they have taken such a hush, hush attitude toward it until they have given their sons and daughters the idea that it was a vile, sinful thing that they ought to be ashamed of, and that to confess you had the desire was a sign that you was next to a brute. Many times young people have had to go to some common, vile sinner to get any information on the subject, and then they received perverted teaching that sent them into marriage unprepared to enter into marriage in a sensible manner, and many of them have made shipwreck of marriage, and could not understand why it happened. If they had been properly instructed along this line they could have been brought to see that it was a beautiful, sacred relationship that had the blessing and approval of God on it. They could have been instructed in such a way until this part of marriage could have been as sacred and fine as the wedding ceremony. Their lives could have been rich and sweet instead of being strained and unnatural. Paul had no hesitancy in dealing with this subject in the frankest manner, and I can't see why we should shy away from it. This is an urge that is common to all mankind. It is God-given and is nothing to be ashamed of. If properly guided and used it can be sanctified and

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can bring real happiness and satisfaction.

Many times I have had men come to me in confidence seeking help along this line. In talking with them I have often discovered that the wife was not always to blame for the tension along this line. It is true that many women have taken the wrong slant on the matter and have defrauded their husbands, but there are other instances in which the husband is as much to blame as the wife. Many men would never think of going off and giving themselves to the other woman, and yet they have defrauded their wives along this line. We need to see that there is more than one way to defraud your wife in the sex relationship. They have never recognized that God has given the woman just as strong an urge along this line as He has to the man, and *unless this urge is fully met* then it leaves the woman tense and nervous. If this continues over a period of months or even years, then the woman will rebel and come to despise the whole thing, and friction will arise in that home. Some men have never considered their wife's longing along this line and have never cultivated the real art of being a lover. They have been too willing to just satisfy their own need and have left the woman tense and *unsatisfied*. I have had two men come to me and talk about their problems along this line, and in both cases I told them that they were to blame for most of it. I gave each of them a copy of "Married Love," by Stopes, and told them to go home and read it and then let their *wives* read it. In both cases they came back and reported that the problem had been

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solved to the mutual happiness of both husband and wife. They informed me that they were as happy together as they were on their honeymoon. In both instances a home was saved from going on the rocks, and two couples had learned that married life can be happy, and that love is a beautiful, sacred thing. This is far better than to go on in ignorance and have your life blighted and your home wrecked.

I would suggest to any couple that is having discord and contention along this line that they get the three following books and read them together. They are: "Married Love," by Stopes; "Enduring Passion," by Stopes and "Marriage and Sex Harmony," by Butterfield. These three books are written in the finest manner possible and may be purchased at any good book store. I would suggest that every young couple get one or all of these books and read them either just before marriage or as soon afterwards as possible. I would also suggest that parents spend a little time in trying to teach their sons and daughters the real truth about this divinely-implanted human urge so that they will enter into married life with a sane attitude toward this vital matter. If they will do this it will save many marriages and bring much happiness to many lives. May the Lord save us from prudishness and fanaticism along this line. May God help us to see what the Bible really teaches on the subject.

Now I realize I have gotten off the main line just a little in this discussion, but I feel justified in doing it, for there is so much misunderstanding along this line

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and so many homes are being broken right at this point. For sometime I have been thinking seriously about trying to write a book and set forth what the Bible teaches about the sex desire and the relationship that should exist between a man and his wife. I have so many people come to me and pour their hearts out, and tell of the unhappiness in their homes until I have become convinced that some one should set forth the Bible truth on this subject so that people would have a Christian conception rather than a warped and perverted one. I hope I have said something in this part of this message that will be of help to people that are confused at this point. If this proves to be true then I will be happy and feel that I was justified in taking this time and space. I, of course, expect that some prudish people will feel that I have been too frank in my discussion along this line. However, I feel perfectly safe in taking my stand with Paul and the teachings of God's word. "Marriage is *honorable*, and *the bed undefiled*." If there is any defilement it is in the mind of people who have the wrong slant on one of the most sacred things that God has ever established. If people are shocked it is because they have an unscriptural conception about the sex desire, and the marriage relationship. If they do have the wrong conception it is someone's duty to set them right and save them from confusion and unhappiness. I have tried in my feeble way to do this very thing.

In getting back now on to the main line I want to say again according to the teachings of the Bible the

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sex desire is not a sinful desire. It is God-given and is as much a part of our humanity as the desire for food or the tendency to breathe. The fact that you have this desire is no indication that you are a low, base, vile person. It is an indication that you are a normal, natural human being just as God made you, and just as God intended you should be. God will not take this desire from you. You are wasting your time and the Lord's time in begging Him to take it from you, for He does not intend to do it. He realizes that you need it even if you think you don't. God will sanctify it and give you grace and strength to control it, and direct it in the right channel. It is not sin, but it may lead to the worst kind of sin. You will always have to guard this human desire and keep it under. If you don't it will wreck your life and destroy your influence. Many preachers and people have gone down right at this point. They have become careless at this point, and as Paul says have made shipwrecks of their lives. Be careful how you conduct yourself toward the opposite sex. Don't pet other women. Spend a little more time in petting your own wife and learn how to become a true lover to her. Do not make a brute out of yourself. Learn how to exercise some self-control. Just remember that while you are a human being and have human desires you are also a spiritual being and are created in the image of God. Act as a Christian should act, and you will find your life enriched and find marriage and love to be one of the most sacred things in the world.

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There are many human desires that are not sinful but may lead to sin, and since we do have a human body with human desires we will have temptations and are liable to fall into sin. Many of your temptations will come through this channel. Be on guard at this point and ask God to give you grace, wisdom and strength.

### (3) *We will be tempted from without.*

The third source of temptation is from without. We not only have to wrestle with our natural human desires, but we have to contend with the forces of evil all about us. Paul says, "We not only wrestle against flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Or, in other words, against wicked spirits in places of authority. There is a devil to contend with in this world. Peter tells us that he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Paul tells us that he goes about as an angel of light trying to deceive the very elect, if possible. You will find that this vile world is not a friend to grace to help you on to God. There will be more people and things to cool you off than will ever try to fire you up. There will be more people that will try to tone you down and get you to compromise than will ever get behind you and try to help you along in your struggles to live for God. In fact, many times your own relatives and close friends will do their best to hinder you and try to keep you from being too religious. Many times you will have to grit your teeth and live for God in spite of your

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kinsfolk and the world. We have to contend with the world, the flesh and the devil. You will just have to say, "Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause and blush to speak His name? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? Are there no foes for me to face and must I not stem the tide? Sure I must fight, if I would win, increase my courage Lord. I'll bear the toil, and endure the pain, supported by thy word."

You must also recognize the truth set forth in that great old hymn that says:

A charge to keep I have;  
A God to glorify;  
A never-dying soul to save,  
And fit it for the skies.  
To serve the present age;  
My calling to fulfill,  
O may it all my powers engage  
To do my Master's will.  
Arm me with jealous care;  
As in thy sight to live;  
And O thy servant, Lord prepare  
A strict account to give.  
Help me to watch and pray,  
And on Thyself rely,  
Assured if I my trust betray,  
I shall forever die.

It will be good for you if you will learn to sing quite often:

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My soul, be on thy guard;  
Ten thousand foes arise;  
The hosts of sin are pressing hard,  
To draw thee from the skies.  
O watch, and fight, and pray;  
The battle ne'er give o'er;  
Renew it boldly every day,  
And help divine implore.  
Ne'er think the victory won;  
Nor lay thine armor down;  
The work of faith will not be done,  
'Till thou obtain the crown.  
Fight on, my soul, 'till death  
Shall bring thee to thy God;  
He'll take thee at thy parting breath  
To His divine abode.

As you do this, just make up your mind that you are going to be true to God. Remember that it takes some effort on your part to live the Christian life. This thing of being a Christian is like being a soldier. It takes grit and determination on our part. When Paul came to the end of the journey he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the course. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." May God grant that we may be able to say the same thing. There is grace enough for our needs. "They that be for us are more than they that be against us. Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." We serve a victorious risen Christ, and He can make us more than conquerors, but just remember He expects us to do our part. "We are kept by the power of God *through faith*. This is the victory that overcometh the world *even our faith*. He is able to keep

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that which we have committed unto Him against that day. *Keep yourself in the faith*, for He is able to keep us from falling and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Remember that thousands of others have already gone this way and they have made it through to heaven. The same God that walked with Abraham, Daniel, Peter, John and Paul will walk with you. He loves you and fully intends to bring you home. That is what He had in mind when He reached down and picked you up out of sin. He has already done a lot for you and He will finish the work if you will do your part.

Now, after saying these things I think we are ready to really understand and appreciate the real meaning of the text. The Bishop that I mentioned in the first of this message said, that the thing that opened it up to him was this: He said he was in a mission compound in Shanghai, China, one day, and walked into the chapel. There was a little missionary down at the altar in prayer. She thought she was alone with God and was talking out loud to Him. As she prayed to the Lord she said, "Now, Lord, I am going out into this wicked city today. It is filled with sin and temptation. The very air is filled with wicked spirits, and I know that I will be tempted. In fact, I know I need temptation. I know it will do me good, but, Lord, Satan is so powerful. He is subtle and cunning, and I am so simple and weak. I just know I will never be able to stand in my own strength. Dear Lord, will you please go with me, and when temptations come and Satan assails my soul.

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please deliver me from the wicked one." The Bishop said, "I listened to that little woman pray and said to myself, that is what Jesus had in mind when He taught us to pray. He knew we would be tempted. He knew we needed temptations to develop us and make us strong, but He was trying to teach us that we are notable to meet temptations in our own strength. He was trying to get us to see that we need God at all times so that He can lead us and deliver us out of the hands of the evil one." Someone has said that there ought to be a *comma* after that word us. It ought to read like this: "And lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The comma sets that clause into *temptation off*. It is somewhat like a parenthesis. We don't have to worry about the temptations. Satan will look after that part. He will supply plenty of them for us. We do need to have God *lead us*, and *deliver us* from the evil. The two main words in this petition are the words, *lead*, and *deliver*. We need that, and God will supply that if we will trust Him. Amen.

Sometime ago I preached this sermon, and after the service a lady came up and said, "Does the Bible say that God *tempted* Abraham?" I told her that the Bible did say that, but that in this case it was more of a test. It was not a temptation to do wrong. It was a test to see if Abraham would do what God asked him to do. God *never tempts anyone to do wrong or commit sin*. Satan is the one that tempts us to sin.