

Oaks-West Church of Christ

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The Process of Temptation

by Darrell Trammel

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” (James 1:14–15) James is telling us that falling prey to temptation and sinning is a process. It is not a sudden event, but a gradual process involving a series of compromises that may even seem insignificant at the time. He uses an analogy of pregnancy to illustrate that point. In order to understand this process, let’s consider the story of Peter’s denial of Jesus.

Prior to the crucifixion of Jesus, He and His disciples were together in an upper room and Jesus predicts their abandonment of Him (Mark 14:27). Peter responds, “Even though all may fall away,

yet I will not.” Jesus turns His attention to Peter and tells of the upcoming denial from Peter. Peter can’t even fathom that he would do such a thing and states, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” Peter was making his first mistake — overconfidence. Satan was going to cause Peter to stumble, but not in an area of perceived weakness, rather what Peter thought was an area of strength!

Afterward, Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him into the garden where He tells them, “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (verse 38) Even with this warning, it does not seem that any of them took the advice given. As far as we see, none of them uttered a prayer either for Jesus

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or themselves. The second mistake then was **prayerlessness**. When we are people of frequent prayer, we are showing that we realize our dependence on God and this provides us with a good perspective. Without prayer, people of God are not depending on Him, but on their own strength alone. Satan must relish the opportunity to strike **when we make ourselves weak** by not taking the same advice given to these 3 disciples!

The next event in Mark 14 is the arrival of the soldiers to arrest Jesus. Verse 47 tells us “one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear” and John 18:10 identifies this as Peter. Peter has then made his third mistake — **misguided zeal**. He thought that protecting Jesus would be the right thing to do, but he was forgetting that Jesus had already told them this was going to happen. Peter was opposing the plan of God! We must have zeal to be disciples, but it must be a zeal that is based on the will of God. When our zeal is based solely on human wisdom, it becomes a tool of Satan. Peter made a mistake that many still make today - thinking that a “good” thing must be the will of God.

Now we begin to see more clearly the path Peter is on. As the soldiers take Jesus away, Peter “followed Him **at a distance.**” (verse 54) He is still following - but he

is doing so at a distance. At any given moment in our lives, we either draw closer to God, or distance ourselves from Him. This choice then influences whether we will be strengthened or weakened in our spiritual battle. In addition, Peter is not just distanced from Jesus, but also from the other disciples. As he is following at a distance, he is now surrounded by unbelievers (verse 66) at a point in which he is getting weaker with each passing moment. He is now being **influenced by evil company!** Perhaps the other disciples would have encouraged him to be strong, but he doesn't have that avenue now. He has made his battle all the more difficult.

Now, temptation is mounting and sin is about to come. Peter began with indignation at the thought of denying Christ, much less 3 times! Now, through the night, that is exactly what he does. When the cock crows, Peter remembers the words of Jesus and realizes how far he has come in just one night — and he weeps bitterly (verse 72). While we are critical of Peter at times, who among us can say we have not followed this same path at some (or many) points? The bitterness of sin becomes apparent.

The lesson for us is in realizing the steps that brought Peter to the unthinkable. Recognize the compromises in your life and break the pattern.

Welcome!

When you visit our assemblies, you will be received friendly, kindly and courteously. We believe this to be the natural attitude of those who truly love God and mankind. Though you may at first be among strangers, we hope that you will come to know us well and count us as your friends.

We offer Bible studies as well as correspondence courses for those interested in learning more about what God expects of us.



Upcoming Ladies' Bible Classes - January 28 at Bobbie Gresham's home.

Singing - Friday, January 31 at 7:30 p.m. at Westside church of Christ in Irving.

If you know of upcoming events, please inform Darrell so they can be included here.



Please remember the following individuals in your daily prayers:

June Owens
Jack Wilson
Jerry Richardson
Karen Hallmark
Geraldine's mother (Iva Aleene Morris)
Rich Force
Jim Trammel
Ron & Sue Stanberry
Lynden Kersh
Heidi Force's father

If you know of someone that needs to be on this list, please tell Darrell (email preferred) and provide updates so names stay on the list as long as needed.

We have many that face challenges on a daily basis and need your prayers as well.

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,”
(Ephesians 6:18 ESV)

