

Temptations and the Heart

The closing statement of the book of 1 John is a charge to the little children to keep themselves from idols, a statement seemingly out of place to the carnal man, but explicitly relevant to the purpose of this book, to expose the condition of a heart, namely, whether it is savingly related to Christ. What is an idol? It is a master who is not the great Master! It is an affection that competes with holy affection. It is a competing loyalty, a desire opposing the cry of the new man that His Kingdom would come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is any spiritual state or device that promotes a breach in following the greatest and first commandment to love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength (Mark 12:30). For no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. We cannot serve God and mammon, any earthly thing. (Matt 6:24). Oh sisters, Christ must be sanctified in your thoughts, set apart as LORD, exalted, adored, worship, loved, exceedingly above all else. When the seat of such affection is corrupted, indeed one has not kept himself from idols, and damnation awaits him! What do you desire? What do you desire most? Do you desire meat, raiment...? How shall we escape if we desire not Him foremost?! Are we not promised that if we seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; all these things shall be added unto us? (see Matt 6:25-34) If we desire Christ above all else, there will be no competing desires in the sense that when Christ is truly given sufficient worth in the heart of a man, everything will be “as a loss” and “as dung” in comparison, but when any desire supersedes the desire for Christ, to do His will, to know Him and be known of Him, for His glory, we are most certainly overcome! For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all (Jam 2:10)! If a desire for anything other than the LORD of lords enters in and overcomes you, you surely have fallen from grace and your soul is in exceeding danger. For this reason we are commanded to keep our hearts with ALL DILIGENCE; for out of it are the issues of life (Prov 4:23)! Such desires (which are the essence of idolatry) are called lusts in the Scripture. To lust is to will against His will. To lust is to will against His will!

To Lust = To Will Against His Will

Paul tells the Galatians that if they walk in the Spirit, they should not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For 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 we would. But if we are led of the Spirit, we are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, an such like...they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God! But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Gal 5:16-24)

Beloved sisters, our sinful flesh, the remnant of our old man, is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and thus we are commanded to put off concerning the former conversation the old man, not let sin therefore reign in our mortal body, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof, but put on the LORD Jesus Christ, and make not provision of the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof (Eph 4:22, Rom 6:12, Eph 4:22). Our sinful flesh is willing against the will of God! For this reason John the Baptist, the greatest man born to women (Matt 11:11), says “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30). Why? Because he, in his flesh, desires contrary to the Spirit of God, his LORD, his King, his Master, his Shepherd! These desires are like unto the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things which enter in and choke the WORD and it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:19). For Christ to increase and ourselves to decrease, we must, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (1 Pet 2:11, 2 Cor 10:5).

There is a specific consolation that the LORD does convey to us regarding temptation. Temptation is defined by Scripture as the trying of our faith by enticement of the lusts of our sinful flesh, the old man (James 1:3, 14). James tells us to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of our faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire WANTING NOTHING. In the midst of such trying of our faith, such enticements of the carnal lusts of our members, we may endure temptation and be blessed, and when we are tried, receive the crown of life, which the LORD has promised to them that love Him, or we can be drawn away of our own lust and enticed, and when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (see James 1:2-4, 12, 14-15) When the lust is entertained and enticed and conceives, as will happen when we sow to the flesh and of the flesh reap corruption, we do end up falling (Gal 6:8). But when we endure, we are being patient, and when patience has her perfect work, we become perfect and entire wanting nothing. That is, when we endure through the resisting of temptation to give in to fleshly lusts, God is working to remove the lust itself! This principle is seen in 1 Pet 4:1-2 “*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;² That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*” And in 1 Pet 5:8-11 “*⁸Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:⁹ Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.¹⁰ But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.¹¹ To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*” In resisting temptation, in resisting the devil, there is a time period of suffering in the flesh, of suffering “*a while*”, and after this, the LORD removes the lusts such that we are “*perfect and entire wanting nothing*”, no longer living the rest of our time “*in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*”, for God will have effectually, in the respective lust, made us perfect, stablished, strengthened, and settled! In this way, as we are progressively sanctified, the lusts of the old man are unmasked by the trying of our faith, and as we are patient in suffering, even to

the point of resisting blood (Heb 12:4), He is purging us of the lusts themselves, and the outcome is that temptations lose their power!

*I need Thee every hour,
Most gracious Lord.
No tender voice like thine,
Can peace afford.*

*I need Thee, oh I need Thee
Every hour I need Thee!
Oh, bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee!*

*I need Thee every hour,
Stay Thou nearby.
Temptations lose their pow'r
When Thou are nigh.*

*I need Thee every hour,
In joy or pain.
Come quickly and abide,
Or life is vain.*

*I need Thee every hour,
Most holy One.
Oh, make me Thine indeed,
Thou blessed Son!*

Hymn: I Need Thee Every Hour

For the foundation of the God standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great hosue there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself of these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Thus we must flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the LORD out of a pure heart. (2 Tim 2:19-22) In closing carefully meditate upon and take to heart the following two charges:

³⁴ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.³⁵ For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.³⁶ Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:34-36)

¹³Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance;¹⁵ But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.¹⁷ And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: (1 Pet 1:13-17)

“Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42)