

March 13, 2011

## **Born Again Series - Discipleship**

### **Romans 7:13-25 – How do I deal with temptation?**

ILLUST: The power of the caramel...

- ...a few years ago I headed to the Pastor's conference...in Southern, California...

I always look forward to this conference, several days of great teaching...worship and getting refreshed in the Lord...

- ...I especially like the time alone...even though you are with 800 other pastors...I always take time...
  - ...en route to the conference and then in the early mornings to just get into the word...and pray and just let the Lord speak to my heart...

One of the things I will commit myself to is allowing the Lord to speak to any personal issues or things I am dealing with...

- ...that may be hindering what God wants to accomplish in my life...AND...in most cases the primary issue for me is my **unhealthy addiction to food**...
  - ...I love to eat...large quantities...and if given the opportunity...sugar which if I am not careful can be a real downfall for me...

I love getting to the conference on Sunday evening...I stop at In-n-Out burger...a must when you visit Southern California...

- ...and then head to the conference center around 50 miles from the airport...

Traditionally I will meet one of my pastor friends for a time of sitting in the natural hot springs at the conference center...

- ...swapping notes about all that the Lord is doing in the churches the Lord has us serving in...

On this particular year...it was much the same and I was wanting to really seek the Lord regarding how my desire to eat...

- ...seemed to get into the way of hearing clearly from the Lord...I found it to be a real distraction...

- ...AND...I was filled with the expectation that the Lord would **finally get the job done**...in eliminating this eating distraction from my life...

AND SO...I made contact with my buddy Dave, whose wife...Shannon...happened to be at the conference center...she is an editor for some of books that Pastor Chuck Smith writes...

- ...AND...he said she had a present for me...to meet them near the pool...

When I got there later that evening...we greeted one another...and Dave gave me a bag of his homemade beef jerky...

- ...which is amazing I might say...and I thought...great...some healthy snacks...

BUT THEN...after greeting his wife, Shannon, she hands me a baggie of her **homemade black licorice caramels**...

- ...which are the most amazing caramels I have ever eaten...absolutely incredible...
  - ...my mouth is watering right now as I am thinking about them...

AND...as I am taking the bag and thanking her for her generosity...I am thinking about what I was wanting the Lord to do in this area of eating sugar...

- ...AND...I am faced with this HUGE temptation...and I begin to reason with myself...
  - ...unbeknownst to Dave and Shannon... *"I need to eat one...so as not to offend her...and then I can have one or two...each day...just keep it in moderation."*

WELL to make a long story short...I had the one...so as not to offend...and then another...

- ...AND...on the short journey from the hot springs to my room...I managed to pound down another 8 or 10 caramels...one right after the other...

In that moment...realized that **I had failed...in standing against temptation**...and felt completely defeated in the very thing I was determined not to do...

- ...I felt horrible...discouraged about having given in to that which I determined to not give into...TEMPTATION BEAT ME!!!

LISTEN...We all deal with temptation! I wish it were not so...but it is...

- ...AND...this morning we are going to look at this whole issue of temptation and specifically answer the question...
  - ...**How do I deal with temptation?**...and extremely important subject if we expect to grow into a mature Christian...

AND...we are going to specifically look at...three things regarding temptation...

- 1) Understanding Temptation...
  - 2) The Solution to Overcoming Temptation...
    - 3) Experiencing Victory over Temptation...

### **LET'S LOOK AT OUR TEXT...Romans 7:13...**

As I said...everyone of us deals with temptation...and will deal with it until we are absent from this body which is so prone to temptation...

- ...AND...are present with the Lord...and there are few men...who understood temptation as well as the apostle Paul...

Paul's words will help us with the first thing we are going to be looking at...

- ...which is...**Understanding Temptation...**

**Romans 7:13–25 (NKJV)** — **13** Has then what is good become death to me? [...Paul is talking about the Old Testament Law...the commandments of God given to Moses...] Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good [...that is the law...], so that sin through the commandment [...through the law...] might become **exceedingly sinful**. [...the purpose of the law...the commandments of God...was to help us realize when we are sinning against God...the purpose of a the speeding limit...is to tell us when we are violating...or sinning against the speeding limit...] **14** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal [...I am prone to do things I shouldn't do...prone to satisfy the flesh...my carnal desires...to eat more caramels than I know that I should...], **sold under sin**. **15** For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. **16** If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. **17** But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **18** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. **19** For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. **20** Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that

dwells in me. **21** I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. **22** For I delight in the law of God according to the **inward man** [...the born again man...the spiritual man...]. **23** But I see another law in my members [...in my body...in my mouth and eyes and hands...and those things that partake in the sin...], warring against the law of my mind [...there is a wrestling that goes on when we are dealing with temptation... cartoon...the devil on one shoulder...an angel on the other...], and [...when the temptation succeeds...] bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. **24 O wretched man that I am!** [...this is precisely how I felt as the near dozen freshly consumed caramels were settling in my stomach...] Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul is describing...TEMPTATION...ever so clearly the struggle that every person... young...new Christian and old...seasoned Christian will experience...

**Q:** What is it...what is temptation?

- ...ED – enticement or allurements...CONSIDER the synonyms for temptation... words that mean the same thing...
  - ...*lure, attraction, pull, seduction, inducement*...those caramels were screaming at me from the bag...

Temptation is like a *magnet*...that pulls you in a direction that is not helpful to you in your faith...

- ...in fact...every temptation you will face as a Christian...is intended to draw you away from God...temptations are NEVER good...

When we make a decision to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior...

- ...we make a conscious decision to leave those things behind which were destructive to us...
  - ...and instead draw towards the Lord...who will help us to become the person we were created to be...

NOW...before we go any further...I want you to understand something very important about temptation...right from the beginning...

- ...we will look at it in more detail in just a moment...BUT...be settled in your heart once and forever...
  - ...that...TEMPTATION...is NOT...sin...this is important to always keep in

mind when dealing with temptation...

**Q:** Where did temptation come from?

**TURN WITH ME...Genesis 3:1-6...**

**Genesis 3:1–6 (NKJV)** — **1** Now the serpent [...whom we know to be Satan...the Devil...] was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” **2** And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3 but** of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” **4** Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” **6** So **when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.** She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Adam and Eve were the first man and woman ever made...and living in the garden of Eden...

- ...AND...they were given the choice to eat of ANY fruit in the garden...BUT...the one which God told them not to...

AND SO...from the very creation of man...God gave man choice to **choose** obedience or disobedience...

- ...in the very same way He has given us choice today...

When Eve was tempted with something that God said would **not** be good for her...she had to decide whether she would trust and obey God...

- ...or fulfill her own desire...she was tempted by her **physical** appetite...when she *saw that the tree was good for food...*
  - ...by her **visual** appetite...when she saw...*that it was pleasant to the eyes...*
    - ...AND...her **intellectual** appetite...when she saw...*that the tree was desirable to make her wise...*

**Q:** How many temptations come our way...every day...temptations which fall...

- ...into one of these categories...*physical, visual* and *intellectual*...temptations?

NOW...in looking at this first account of temptation...and giving into sin...we see who

the SOURCE of our temptation is...

- ...the Devil...Satan...whom we know tempted Jesus in the wilderness at the beginning of His earthly ministry...

NOW...while I believe...at some level...Satan is the source or root of all temptation...

- ...there are those temptations that we must take responsibility for...

Yes...the Devil knows our weaknesses and is always looking for a way to tempt us...

- ...BUT...as we will see in a moment...if we expect to be able to overcome our temptations...we must be aware of what our own weaknesses are...

Other people in our lives can also be a source of our temptation... which we have all experienced in some form or another...

- ...which is why we must be careful about whom we choose to hang out with...

**1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV) — 33** Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”

We really understood this...especially when we were unbelievers...in fact...it may have been the temptations that came through others...

- ...which hindered your coming to faith...BUT...thanks be to God...in Jesus you were able to overcome...

### **TURN WITH ME...James 1:12...**

One of the most important things about **understanding temptation**...is understanding the **progression** from temptation to sin...

**James 1:12–18 (NKJV) — 12** Blessed is the man who **endures temptation**; for when he has been approved [...when he had overcome the temptation...], he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. **13** Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, **nor does He Himself tempt anyone**. [...remember when Jesus taught the disciples to pray...*lead us not into temptation*...He was saying...*leave us not in temptation* (when it comes)...and so God will never be part to tempting us...] **14 But** [...James says...] each one is tempted when **he** [...take personal responsibility...each one is tempted when he...] is drawn away by **his own desires** and **enticed** [...this word *enticed* means...*to catch by a bait*...NOTE...at this point...of the temptation...the enticement...there is no sin...BUT...]. **15 Then**, [...if the temptation isn't dealt with...] when desire has **conceived** [...when conception takes place...when a person takes the bait...gives into the temptation...], it gives birth to sin;

and sin, when it is **full-grown**, brings forth death. **16** Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. **17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above [...comes from the Lord...], and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. **18** Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth [...through Jesus Christ...], that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Temptation is not the sin...the progression is clear...

- *...temptation (based on our own desires)...conception which gives birth to sin...and when the sin is full grown...it brings forth death...*

AND SO...the second things we are going to look at...

- **...The Solution to Overcoming Temptation...**I love this...we read it in our passage in Romans...

**Romans 7:24–25 (NKJV)** — **24** O wretched man that I am! **Who** will deliver me from this body of death? **25** I thank God—**through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

The temptation comes...you are feeling weak...and someone hands you a bag of caramels...

- ...I know what I want to do...I know what I should do...wretched man that I am...who can rescue me from this body of death...
  - *...I thank God...through Jesus Christ our Lord!...notice the declaration that Jesus is our Lord...*

Jesus said...

**John 16:33 (NKJV)** — **33** These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation [...you will have temptations...]; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

LISTEN...there is NO ONE...absolutely NO ONE...who understands temptation better than Jesus...

- ...AND...there is no one who overcame that temptation better than Jesus...AND He is the only One...who NEVER gave into the temptations when they came...

We have read this verse before...

**Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)** — **15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was **in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

**Q:** When was Jesus tempted?

**Mark 1:12–13 (NKJV)** — **12** Immediately [...after Jesus' baptism...] the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. **13** And He was there in the wilderness forty days [...here is where Jesus was tempted *in all points as we are...*], tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

**Q:** Why did God allow Jesus to be tempted in this manner?

**Hebrews 2:17–18 (NKJV)** — **17** Therefore, in all things He [...Jesus...] had to be made like His brethren [...made into a man...], that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [...to satisfy the wrath of God which man deserved...] for the sins of the people. **18** For in that He Himself has suffered, **being tempted**, [...**Q:** Why?...For what reason was Jesus tempted?...that...being tempted...] He is able to **aid those who are tempted**.

You see...we can never say, "*Lord, you don't understand how hard it was?*"

### **TURN WITH ME...1 Corinthians 10:13...**

We looked at this verse when we looked at... "*How do we talk to God?*"...

- ...BUT...we can really appreciate it when we consider it in light of that battle with temptation that wars within us...

Let's look at it again...

**1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)** — **13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man [...in other words...*there is no temptation you are **ever** going to come across...that is new or **unique to you or the Lord...***]; but **God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted **beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will also make **the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it.

When Paul found himself in these situations...he came to understand that the Lord's strength in Jesus was enough to get him through...

- ...He understood that God will always provide a way for him to escape the temptation when it came...

### **LOOK AT...2 Corinthians 12:8...**

**2 Corinthians 12:8–10 (NKJV)** — **8** Concerning this thing [...this weakness and temptation that he had...Paul said...]I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. **9** And He [...Jesus...] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for **My strength** is made

perfect in weakness [...in your weakness...].” Therefore [...Paul concluded...] most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities [...in my weaknesses, in the things that I am easily tempted in...], that the **power of Christ** may rest upon me. **10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong [...then Jesus is strong in me...].

Paul said...that whenever he found himself in those places of being weak...He found Jesus to be strong in him...

- ...AND...by His grace...Paul was able to withstand the difficulty...the temptations when they came...

Here is the bottom line in overcoming temptation...**you can’t do it without Jesus...**

- ...AND...here is how Jesus accomplishes this...in those times...

Here comes the temptation...and you immediately cry out to Jesus...

- ...*“Lord Jesus, I am going to need your help here...I am holding in my hand a bag of caramels...*
  - *...and there is no way in my own strength...that I can overcome this temptation...*
    - *...Lord open my eyes to the way of escape for me!”*

AND...because it is impossible for God to ever lie...and He has promised to provide a way of escape...He will...

- ...and...what that way looks like is different...for each person...based on the situation...

For me...it may have been...the strength to not eat that first caramel...or tell them I would be right back...and take them back to the room so I wouldn’t be tempted in that moment...

- ...OR...be willing to say, *"Shannon...that was so sweet of you...BUT...I have to be honest with you..."*
  - *...those caramels are so incredibly good...that I can’t keep from eating just one...*
    - *I am going to take two...and have to give you the rest...AND...if I come back to you for more...which I may very well...I want you to*

*shoot me!*"...you get the idea...

We must be willing to take whatever escape the Lord presents to us...if we truly want to deal with the temptation...

- ...otherwise we are only kidding ourselves...and are more interested in giving birth to our temptation...our enticement...
  - ...than honoring the Lord...by overcoming the temptation...He is always ready to strengthen us to overcome...

### **FINALLY...Experiencing Victory Over Temptation...**

There are four things you need to do to insure that you will experience victory over the temptations when they come...AND...remember...they will come...

#### **ONE...**

- **Seek to understand and accept your weaknesses...**

You will never be able to avoid temptation until you are honest with yourself what your temptations and weaknesses are...

- ...apart from the Lord...no one knows what they are better than you...AND...you can't hide them from the Lord

Whether it is pride, lust, eating, alcohol, movies, gossip...you name it...call them what they are...and...TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY...

- ...have an open heart before the Lord...and let the Holy Spirit reveal what they are...He will not be able to help you until you admit them to be what they are...

ILLUST: The days that followed the caramel eating incident...or failure...

- ...I was crying out to the Lord...and He said to me...matter of fatly...
  - ...*"Ron...food is an 'idol' to you!"*...

Up until that time...I had either never heard that...or never wanted to hear it...

- ...AND...in that moment...I had to acknowledge my passion or love for eating for what it really was...idol worship...
  - ...I never imagined having a little stone figure that I would light candles

and worship...BUT...the Lord said to me... *"In my eyes...there is no difference!"*...it was definitely a defining moment for me...

## **TWO...**

- **Guard yourself from the world...where temptations are rampant...**

**Romans 12:2 (NKJV)** — 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- ...we will never know...*that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*...for our lives...
  - ...which is essential for spiritual growth...if we are spending **so much time** with the things of the world...
    - ...that the world is conforming our actions and our thinking...

We avoid this by keeping our minds fixed on spiritual things rather than worldly things...

**Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)** — 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are of **good report**, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy**—**meditate on these things**. [...think on these things...]

**Galatians 6:7–8 (NKJV)** — 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, **that he will also reap**. 8 For he who sows to his flesh [...to the things of this world...] will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Which brings us to...

## **THREE...**

- **Walk in the spirit...**

This is a full-proof way to insure that we will never give into temptation...

**Galatians 5:16–17 (NKJV)** — 16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, **and** you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Failure to walk in the spirit leads to all kinds of problems...

- ...we must always ask ourselves...is what I am doing right now...or going to do...feeding the spirit in me...or is it feeding my flesh...
  - ...is it feeding my weakness...increasing temptation...or is it strengthening me to be able to withstand the temptation when it comes...

Lastly...

#### **FOUR...**

- **Learn to recognize and take the ways of escape when they come...**

As you are choosing to walk in the Spirit...those ways of escape will be extremely clear...

- **...don't wait** until the temptation comes...to determine your escape route...

Many occasions to sin...could have been prevented by **avoiding** the occasion in the first place...AGAIN...you know what that is...

ILLUST: Whenever you fly...the flight attendant...gets up...

- ...points out the exit doors...what to do if the cabin pressure drops...oxygen masks...

**Q:** Do we wait until the plane is going down to review them?

- ...you obviously know the answer to that...we can never be TOO proactive in dealing with temptation...

#### **CONCLUSION...**

NOW...you may be thinking...a bag of caramels...are you kidding me...you don't have a clue...what temptation is...

- ...to which I would say...with all due respect... *"You don't have a clue what I have gone through in this area!"*...and the torment it has caused me...

LISTEN...you must never underestimate another brother or sister's weakness...and the impact or toll it takes on them...

- ...at the root of **all temptation** is the enemy...whose goal is to draw you away from God...

- ...AND...convince you to give into the temptation for two reasons...

FIRST...to hurt your relationship with God...because the devil hates God...

- ...and...SECONDLY...to bring any sort of dishonor to God through a failed testimony...

Learning how to avoid and overcome temptation is of paramount importance if we expect to grow in our maturity as Christians...

- ...never forget...who you once were....AND...what you exchanged...what you gave up...for Jesus...
  - ...whom you recognized as so much better...and you never want to do anything to sacrifice that...

There is a proverb that I like to think about...in regards to the temptation to ever go back to what the Lord delivered me from...

**Proverbs 26:11 (NKJV) — 11** As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly.

I can think of few things more disgusting than this picture of a dog eating his own vomit...

- ...YET...that is the picture of what happens when we give into the temptation that takes us backwards rather than forward in our relationship with Jesus...

AND SO...

1)...Never be afraid to be honest with yourself about the Temptations...the Weaknesses which you struggle with...

- ...accept that they may be a struggle for the rest of your life...2) Guard yourself from the world...where those temptations are rampant...
  - ...3) Walk in the Spirit...and you will never have to worry about giving into the temptations when they come...
    - ...4) Learn to recognize and take the ways of escape when the come...God is faithful to always...always provide them...

**PRAY...**