

# Overcoming Temptation

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In many aspects of our lives today we look at history to plan how to handle the future. We apply the study of history to be more effective in government, politics, business, and probably other areas. We study the past and even make charts, graphs, and prepare all sorts of summative documents to help make decisions for the future. While we realize the effectiveness of this technique to these areas of application, we sometimes fail to use the examples of those in the past to help us plan and make decisions in our service to God.

When faced with temptation, we can look at the many examples given us by God to help us be more effective in our desire to serve God.

We remember the children of Israel and how they were in the land of Egypt. God delivered them out of the land and appointed Moses to lead them to a land of promise. The people of Israel were faced with a number of temptations and sadly, many times they did not overcome them as they should have. Let us notice a few reasons why and use their example to help us as we face similar temptations.

## **They had a Lack of Faith in God**

Even after God arranged the people's release from Egyptian captivity through a series of miracles, the people failed on several occasions to have faith in God after their release.

In Ex. 14:12 God's people, when blocked in their escape from Egypt by the Red Sea, failed to have faith in God. They wished they had stayed in Egypt and served the Egyptians rather than serve God and trust in Him.(Ex. 14:12)

God delivered them at the Red Sea and yet, in Ex. 16:3 we remember they again failed to have faith in God to deliver them when they were hungry and thirsty. They accused God of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger, yet God fulfilled their needs with manna in the morning and quail in the evening Ex. 16:8-13. God also provided them with water to quench their thirst Ex 17:6

Today, if we are going to be successful in overcoming temptation then we must have faith in God. Hebrews 11:6 says **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”** We must trust that God is both willing and able to provide the things we need. We may not always get everything we want, but we will have what we need when we are faithful to God.

## **They Failed to Put God First**

In Exodus 32:1 we remember the people making a molten calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments from God. The Israelites put their own desires before God choosing even to worship idols that were more in line with what they wanted instead of putting God first and striving to please Him.

In Matt. 19:21 Jesus told a rich young ruler, who apparently was a good man (he kept the commandments vs. 20) to sell all that he had and follow Him. We know the lesson for the young man, and for us, is that material things should not be before God.

Matthew 19:29 says **“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”** We as Christians cannot put money, family, possessions or our own desires before God and be pleasing in His eyes.

In Matthew 6:33 we find **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

If we put God FIRST on our priority list, then He says the other things we need will be provided for us, and we will be better able to overcome the wiles of the devil.

## **Failed to Heed God's Word**

By not preparing themselves to deal with temptation, God's people failed to heed the word of God and sinned.

In Ex. 16: 20-27, when God gave them manna to eat, He told them how much to gather and not to gather on the Sabbath. They did not heed God's word and sinned by gathering more than they needed and saving it (16:20) and by going out to gather on the Sabbath (16:27).

Nadab and Abihu failed to heed God's word in the fire that was to be offered unto the Lord in Lev. 10. They sinned and were killed by God.

We must prepare ourselves to overcome temptation and heed the word of God lest we sin.

The psalmist said in Psalms 103:17-18 **“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;**

**18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”**

1 John 2:4 **“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”**

1 John 5:2 **“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”**

By preparing ourselves to overcome temptation, we will heed God’s word and not fall into the same trap of sin as did the children of Israel.

Overcoming temptation was a problem for the children of Israel because they had a lack of faith in God, they did not put God first in their lives, and they failed to heed the word of God. Even though they often did not overcome temptation, we know that it was possible for them to do so. As we have studied Israel during this time, we cannot help but be reminded of an example of two men who were likewise tempted during this time and were faithful to God.

Joshua and Caleb had faith in God’s ability to honor his promises.

Numbers 14:8 **“If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us...”**

Caleb put God first in his life and heeded the commandments of the Lord.

Deut. 1:36 **“Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.**

We know Satan is always seeking who he may devour ( I Peter 5:8) and we know we will and are facing temptation daily. If we each took just a moment to think about what the temptations are that we are facing and attempt to write them on paper, what would we write? Would we realize we are being tempted with materialism, worldliness, discontent with our brethren, lying, maliciousness? There is no doubt Satan is at work and we **MUST** be vigilant to withstand the tactics of the devil.

The people of Israel who chose to give in to Satan perished in the wilderness. They fell short of their reward and landed squarely upon punishment.

Joshua and Caleb were able to overcome the wiles of Satan and were given the promised land for their reward.

Let us learn from the examples of both the Israelites and Joshua and Caleb as we seek to serve the Lord in anticipation of our reward.

2 Timothy 4:8 **“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”**

