

**Pastor Tom Mortenson**

**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**August 11, 2024**

**Temptation**

**James 1:13-15**

**Prayer:** *Father, I thank you that every single one of us has this opportunity to spread the aroma of Christ, and Barbara just did it exceptionally well. She didn't feel it was something that she needed to share with us and we learned more and more about that as we saw more and more people that she had touched, and we are privileged to have been just part of her life for the time that she was with us, and we're grateful for her and grateful for what she brought to this church. And so this morning again we're looking at gifts, and the gift that we're looking at is your word. We just want to open it up, we want to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. We pray for the strength, insight, wisdom and guidance that is there through your Holy Spirit, and we pray it will be of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

As you know or might know that we have been revisiting the book of James, and our text this morning is taken from James 1:13-15, which says: *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no*

*one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

Well James' focus in this verse is clearly on the word "temptation," and at this point it's probably helpful to go over three different "T" words that we see in the English translations that tend to have meanings that are actually easy to confuse.

So far just in the few weeks that we've been looking at James we've seen three "T" words in James, and the first one there is the word "trial." If you remember, *"Count it all joy when you encounter various trials."*

And then there's another "T" word, test, says: *"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."*

And finally we have our third "T" word, the word "tempted." *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."*

So we have three English words that are being used interchangeably

to translate two different Greek words which can also be used somewhat interchangeably. So the easiest way to get through the confusion is to understand that a trial, a test, and a temptation is defined by the intent of the one producing it. A test or a trial is always a solicitation for growth and blessing by virtue of the source or trial and the source is always God.

Paul knew he *"could do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* because he had been tested through many and varied trials. Those came from God and they were designed to strengthen Paul by giving him an experiential knowledge that Christ could carry him through any test.

Now a temptation on the other hand, that's always a solicitation to sin and its consequences. And the source of a temptation can be either the world, the flesh, or the devil. And what is confusing about trials and temptations is that they can often occur simultaneously. And the only way you're going to be able to sort them out is to look at the intent behind them.

Let me give you an example. Many, many years ago -- well, not that many but there was an athletic Cinderella story about a Harvard graduate named Jeremy Lin. This is someone who tried to make it into the NBA and he failed. He was cut from two different teams,

he was on his last legs when he was picked up by the New York Knicks and basically just thrown into a game to see how he would do. And he took that humble opportunity and began playing on a level that folks hadn't seen in basketball in many, many years. Basically he took the basketball world by storm by having an outstanding NBA debut.

Jeremy Lin went from sleeping on his brother's couch to being talked about by -- as an athlete not just in the United States but all over the world. You see, he was an American born Asian whose family was from Taiwan. And with few notable exceptions, it's extremely rare for an Asian man to excel in basketball, and it seems like all of China as well as all of the Asian communities in North America were fascinated by this man Jeremy Lin.

What made him of compelling interest to me was the fact that Jeremy Lin was a committed Christian. And I was reading an interview that he had given on a Christian website while he was still a student at Harvard and he spoke about basketball, he spoke about race and faith, and in that interview he gave an excellent example of the difference between a test, which is a good thing, and a temptation, which is a bad thing.

The interviewer asked this question. He said this. He said:

"Everyone who steps on a basketball court will hear taunts and insults. Yet racial slurs are another matter, and you have had to confront them regularly throughout your career, as the first Asian-American to reach this level. Do you find it particularly difficult to respond in grace when racial slurs are used?"

This is how Lin responded. He said, "I'm naturally competitive and cocky. I love proving people wrong. I love competing. When I first started hearing those remarks, I would always want to say something back, or to play well to get them back. As I grew older, I realized that I shouldn't allow that stuff to effect me, and at the same time I shouldn't retaliate. I shouldn't say anything back. So at this point, now, this year, it hasn't really bothered me. It's just something I'm used to now, and it's a good opportunity to reflect the grace of God, when you don't say anything back, or when you're really respectful in return. That says something powerful."

Now you understand, these racial slurs that Jeremy is hearing on the court, they were simultaneously a test and a temptation. The enemy was using it as a temptation to induce Lin to respond in kind to get angry enough to sin, but God was using the very same taunts to build character in Lin so that he would continue to grow by experience in his understanding that even his response to racial

slurs can be construed as something that's glorifying God.

So tempting by the enemy and testing by God can occur in the very same incident. And again, the principle goes all the way back to the Old Testament book of Genesis. I mean, when Joseph was confronted by his brothers -- when Joseph confronted his brothers for the evil that they did to him, he repeated the exact same principle. In *Genesis 50:20*, he said: "*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.*"

Alexander Maclaren points out, and illustrates this. He says: "(Tempted) conveys the idea of appealing to the worst part of man, with the wish that he may yield and do the wrong. (Tested) means an appeal to the better part of man, with the desire that he should stand. Temptation says, 'Do this pleasant thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is wrong.' Trial or proving says, 'Do this right and noble thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is painful.'"

So in our text this morning James is taking to task anyone who would even suggest that God would be the author of a solicitation to evil, which is what temptation is. He says: *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.* James simply

declares God cannot be tempted with evil.

And since we're all sons and daughters of Adam, we're all born with a nature that's well acquainted with evil. We are comfortable with our own fallenness, and because we oftentimes just compare ourselves with ourselves it's difficult for us to even imagine the holiness of God. It's hard for us to even imagine someone to whom evil is absolutely antithetical.

Someone once said the closest we can come to understanding God's response to evil would be to understanding our response to the sensation of pain. The raw sensation of pain is by design antithetical to human experience. We naturally recoil from it. I can't be tempted by someone offering to pull my fingernails out. If I'm at all mentally healthy, I'm absolutely repulsed and horrified by the notion of being branded with a hot poker or having my limbs pulled out of joint on a rack. Furthermore, I doubt I could interest any of you to that kind of torture. We can't be tempted with pain and we certainly can't use pain to tempt others. Pain is as abhorrent to us as evil is to God.

So it's virtually impossible to even imagine being attracted to pain unless you're mentally unbalanced like a masochist would be and likewise is the attraction of evil for God. I mean, to even

suggest that it's God who's responsible for any solicitation to evil -- which is exactly what temptation is -- is to impugn God, it's to make him the author of sin. And *Habakkuk 1:13* says: *You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.*

So therefore is it not absurd to assume that God's going to use the very thing that he detests to cause us to fall. The one who's accusing God of temptation is someone who's already comfortable in fixing blame somewhere else and if that somewhere else happens to be God, well then so be it, they think. James utterly rejects that notion and he fixes the blame exactly where it belongs. This is what he says. He says: *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

So here we have James, he's breaking down what it means to be tempted into its component parts because temptation never exists in a vacuum. In fact temptation is a continuum that starts by being lured and enticed and then it ends ultimately in death.



And the reason why God can't be tempted with evil is because temptation itself isn't neutral. You see, temptation takes place when you've already been lured and enticed. I mean, you may not have gone the full cycle which ends in sin and death, but if you've been tempted you've already begun the journey.

And again, let me explain this by describing what it means to be lured and enticed by going back to a very old Tweety and Sylvester cartoon. Now I'm probably dating myself. If you're younger, you might not even know that there was a cartoon character named Sylvester and a bird named Tweety.

Sylvester was not the brightest of predators. He almost always got himself in trouble doing stupid things. And I remember in particular a Sylvester cartoon that pictured well this idea of being lured and enticed. Sylvester is walking down the road and a window opens and a hot blueberry pie is placed on the window sill and there's nothing wrong with enjoying the aroma of a hot blueberry pie, but in this case the aroma is clearly enticing Sylvester to steal it.

And so you see in the cartoon the aroma from the pie starts acting like it's got a life of its own and it goes right up to Sylvester and it goes under his chin and it starts pulling at him and it

literally lifts him off the ground. It's a great picture of what it means to be lured and enticed.

The reason why James says that God can't be tempted is because there's nothing in evil that is in any way enticing to God. Hebrews 2 says that Jesus as our high priest, however, was tempted. And after all, we understand that being human means being subject to temptation itself, and if Jesus wasn't subject to temptation in some sense then we would understand him as not being fully human, I mean, then his experience wouldn't fully mirror our experience.

*But Hebrews 2:17 says: Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

So if you indulge me as I go back to the Sylvester cartoon, allow me to put this into context. Just take again, take that same picture of Sylvester being lured and enticed by the smell of the blueberry pie and the cartoon connects because what we imagine ourselves being lured by that aroma but what if instead of a blueberry pie on that window sill there was something that you found absolutely repulsive? You know, in my case I could picture

somebody opening the window and putting on that window sill a steaming platter of fried calf's liver. That's something that I find absolutely repulsive. The aroma leaves the platter and it wafts over to my nose and starts beckoning me just like it did Sylvester, but it would have no ability to entice me because I truly hate calf's liver.

Now put that into context of Jesus. Jesus was tempted as we are in that the very same opportunities to sin were presented to him that were presented to us, but in him, they found no corresponding connection to evil. There was nothing whatever enticing about evil. There was no attractiveness of evil to lure Jesus as it lures us. Jesus has the same desires that we have but these desires never became an occasion of sin.

You know, Jesus grew hungry and tired, but he never found the evil of gluttony or laziness enticing like we do. And when he was insulted, he didn't find the joy of retaliation alluring. Instead he found the joy of obedience compelling. As *1 Peter* puts it, he said: *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

So Jesus, Jesus' temptation, it was the same as ours in the opportunities that it presented and where the similarity ended was in Jesus' response to those opportunities.

Russell Moore in his book about temptation *Tempted and Tried* says this, he says: "We expect Jesus to have endured temptation as we endured temptation - and he did. But much of what we include in 'temptation' isn't temptation at all. It's beyond our good, created desires being appealed to. It's instead, those embryonic stages of sinful desire. Jesus' desert testing was indeed 40 days of torture, but his torture was not because he, like we, wanted to do the forbidden. It is because embedded with those good, natural human desires, he longed for what was good in each of the things he was temporarily denied."

You see, unlike us, what moved Jesus was not the sinful predilection to evil like the one we're born with but an absolute commitment to glorify his Father through obedience. I mean, as the second Adam, Jesus had the same free will that Adam had. He could have chosen the pathway that he would take, obedience or rebellion; but what filled him with desire, what lured and enticed him was the ability to take each opportunity for testing or tempting and turn it into an opportunity to pass each test thereby glorifying his Father. And whether it was a test from his Father or a temptation

from the enemy, Jesus' response was consistent and it was perfect.

And we see at the very start of his earthly ministry right after he has come out of the waters of baptism, he's led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to undergo temptation and the temptation is directly from Satan. Jesus is doing this as our representative, and he did it in the very same power of the Holy Spirit that we have flowing through our spirits when we received the gift of salvation.

*Colossians 2:9* tells us we have the living Christ within us. It says: *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*

So what Jesus went through in the desert, that was clearly satanic solicitations to do evil, and by definition, they were temptations that he resisted. And he went through them to show us how we could go through them as well because he knew that as believers, we have targets on our backs. I mean, the more the enemy sees the image of Jesus in you, the greater he's going to try to destroy it. Temptation is one of his greatest weapons and he certainly does not hesitate to use it.

Now I don't want to overstate this but understand, there really is monsters out there, monsters who want nothing more than to destroy us because of the image of Christ within us. And again, these are monsters who understand the nature of the spiritual battle that we are right in the middle of and the last thing those monsters want us to think about is their own existence. *1 Peter* says: *Be self-controlled and alert. Our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

And you know, we've heard that scripture so many times, I fear we have bled it of its impact. I mean, have you ever seen a real lion up close and personal, I mean, have you ever heard one roar?

I remember the first time as an adult I went to a zoo and I remember looking at a lion. I look at that creature, I realize this thing is so huge and so powerful, it could instantly tear me to pieces. I mean, you and I would not have a remote chance of surviving an attack by a lion. And Peter understood that when he described the danger that the devil represents but he also understood how stealthy and cunning a lion can be in his approach. Jobe Martin remarked, this is incredible to realized, he said, the devil was able to talk one-third of all of the angels into rebelling against a holy God and somehow you think you can compete with him? And his ways are never ever overt, they're always

covert.

I'm sure you've all seen those wildlife shows where it shows a lion creeping up on its prey and it's holding itself as low to the ground as it can and it's moving ever so slightly because the prey animal must never know it's there until it's too late. That's exactly how the enemy stalks us. And that's why Peter says, "*be self-controlled and alert.*"

You see, a lion that is stalking is not the same creature that is roaring. It can't let you see your intended end until it's too late. And so the first part of the way that he stalks us, it's always unseen and it's always highly attractive. How else could we be lured? How else can we be enticed?

Russell Moore pointed out what the cattleman already knows. The animals who are being fattened for slaughter, they've never got to realize that that's the goal until it's way too late. I mean, we just don't see ourselves that way but trust me, our enemy certainly does, and he doesn't just want us hurting, he wants us dead. And that's why James says: *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

And so temptation happens when we become lured and enticed by our own desires. The words translated "lured" and "enticed" both have to do with setting a trap in hunting or using a lure in fishing. The idea is to use something pleasurable to draw the victim out of its place of comfort and safety into a place of vulnerability.

You know, every time I discover a mouse in my house, I put out a trap. And usually when I do that, I'm successful. But if you think like a mouse, you think, well, the mouse probably thinks when he sees that, oh, this is my lucky day. He's just crawling around, and he smells this irresistible aroma of peanut butter and he discovers what looks like an easy meal but it's really just death itself being camouflaged. I confess, my intentions, I confess it's to kill the mouse. He doesn't realize it but death is waiting for desire to render him careless enough to throw caution to the wind; and when he does, it's over in a second.

You know, I hear the sound of a steel trap snapping shut and I see a dead mouse with this look of bewildered surprise on his face, because it was the exact opposite of what he was expecting and this moment of enlightenment was his last moment on earth. And so it is with temptation. You see, if you had any inkling of what the end you were headed for is, you would never get near that trap.



So how do we avoid those traps that -- quote -- *"so easily ensnare us?"* Hebrews 12 says: *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

How do we avoid the traps? We look unto Jesus. You see, everything about temptation and the means of escaping it suggests that we've been given a privilege that most of the world neither wants nor even understands. I mean, Jesus stood in the exact same place of temptation that we stand in and he's given us the means to see temptation in way the world could never see it. And what he's telling us is that the secret to being successfully lured and enticed is ignorance. The enemy knows that you can't know that you're being set up because the minute you find out, the game is over.

I mean, if the fish knew that the lure was just a piece of plastic with hooks wiggling in the water, he wouldn't go after it in the first place. And whether it's a fish or a mouse or a person being

tempted, the victim has to be kept in the dark about the nature of what it is that's enticing him.

And the main thing that the enemy doesn't want you to know or remember is who you are in Christ. Jesus Christ left heaven itself, he entered into this world, lived a perfect life and then died a horrible death on the cross in order to glorify his Father by rescuing us. And understand, that's how important the glory of God is to the Father and to the Son. You have to understand, our lives, our lives are a reflection of that glory.

We've been chosen from before the foundation of the world to be made holy and righteous in God so that our transformed lives can bring glory to the Father through the Son. So what do you think the enemy's goal in tempting believers is? Well, it's the exact opposite of glory: It's death. Again he says: *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

See temptation for a non-Christian, it's simply a matter of being kept ignorant and unaware of the gospel, blinding them again and again of the consequences of rejecting that gospel. And we know this is precisely what the devil does, he blinds them because God

has told us so.

I pointed out Paul's words about this just last week. Paul says:  
*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

You see, it's the glory of Christ that the enemy is after.

Understand, when Satan tried to tempt Jesus to turn stones into bread, he went right after Jesus' identity as the son of God. His enticement to create bread was a perfectly normal answer to a hunger that forty days of testing had produced. I mean, just turn those stones into bread and the glory of God would be compromised. I mean, Jesus, just like Adam, would be acting autonomously in his own self interests; that was the lure.

You see, through Satan's temptation, Jesus could address his hunger and demonstrate his miraculous power at the same time and God the Father and Holy Spirit would be out of the loop. I mean, Jesus who came to earth to glorify his Father just like we can by depending solely on his Father's strength and his Father's power is now tempted by Satan to do what? To act on his own.

*Matthew 4 says: And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."*

Well, our temptations, they likewise start with an attack as our identity as children of the living God. And whether it's envy, pride or covetousness, lust, stealing, lies, you name it, temptation begins with an identity confusion that attempts to bring us higher than we ought to be -- like Adam and Eve who actually thought that they could be like God -- or lower than we're destined to be -- like Esau who literally traded in his future just to fill his belly.

You see, there's two great categories of sins that reflect the imbalance of identity confusion that Satan chooses to exploit. We are tempted to either think of ourselves -- quote -- "more highly than we ought" or "more lowly than we are." And thinking more highly than we ought makes us think we have the right to look down on those who don't meet our standards and we ignore the grace that God has poured out on us, we heap judgment on those who have not received it. We call folks who do that Pharisees, and we all know what Jesus thought of them.

You know, that's a sin that I struggle with all the time. When you live like we do in a culture that is collapsing, it's very easy to lose your identity as a sinner saved by grace alone and start

thinking of yourself more highly than you ought. Do that and Satan's got you right where he wants you.

The other side of the coin is its polar opposite. We're tempted to think of ourselves more lowly than we ought, as merely the chief animal among all the animals, a product of the same evolutionary pressure that drives any animal. Think like that, what God actually says takes back seat to how I feel. And how I feel is shaped by the very same instincts that animals are shaped by.

Paul identified that issue over 2,000 years ago in *Philippians 3:18*. He said: *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.*

See, the enemy doesn't really care if you miss high like the Pharisees or if you miss low like the pagans just as long as you miss the mark as a child of the King.

The devil attempted to tempt Jesus by going right to the heart of his identity as the Son of God. Remember what he said? He said: *"If -- If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."* And since Jesus knew he was the son of God, he refused and

he gave the same answer to temptation that we need to give. It says: *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"*

Jesus is showing us the secret to beating temptation is every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That's how we know how the tempter himself works. And so this starts with our identification as a child of God with the understanding that the tempter is going to try to pry that away from you. And whether he makes you into a god or into an animal, the goal is still the same, to get you off center as a child of the living God.

And in the desert Jesus showed us the way to resist temptation, the way to resist being lured and enticed is to understand, first of all, that you're being lured and enticed. Again James says: *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

And so the next thing to understand about temptation is that it's always presented, always in its embryonic form. Jesus speaks of the process, it literally in terms of a pregnancy. He says: *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is*

*fully grown brings forth death.*

Desire conceives and what it conceives is that obviously embryonic. What he's telling us is that temptation always starts out embryonically because no one would embrace it fully grown. The enemy doesn't tempt us with the whole idea sinfully birthed because he knows that we would flee from it.

He doesn't say, "My goal is to destroy your family, ruin your witness and make a shambles of your family legacy, and to do that I need you to commit adultery with that woman over there." Instead he begins it in an embryonic way with a glance and the glance perhaps leads to a conversation, the desire then becomes conceived and this hideous pregnancy is proceeding nicely. The conversation leads to a chance meeting which leads to something else which eventually leads to a birth of something equally hideous but you're not supposed to realize it until it's too late. *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

The enemy's not going to tell you, by the way, I want you hopelessly addicted to porn but I want you -- I can't do that unless you start out realizing that it's not going to be that big a deal. So the addiction I'm going to birth in you is going to start

out embryonically because if you saw it full grown, you would run in a heartbeat. I need you ignorant. I need you lured. I need you enticed. So I will conceive of this addiction incrementally in steps so small you won't even recognize that. I'll do it with soft core porn in a society that sees it as perfectly acceptable. I'll birth it in you before you realize you've been had.

This is how temptation works, and it doesn't matter the sin. Rest assured, the enemy's going to conceive it in you in a way that bears very little resemblance to the full grown thing. The thief is going to find an embryonic desire to swipe little things. Gossip will learn to share tidbits. The abuser will get away with belittling sarcasm. It doesn't matter what the sin is, the enemy knows the value of starting it in us in its infancy. And again: *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

And rest assured, the full grown effect of this hideous pregnancy is not just sinfully blossomed, it is death itself because that's precisely what the enemy's goal is. That's the end goal of all temptation.

I remembered an awful thing that took place in our town over 25 years ago. I remember it like it happened yesterday. In September



of 1998, a man in our hometown gunned down his wife and then his four-year-old and his seven-year-old, then he turned the gun on himself killing his entire family. And I remember driving past that house and seeing in the yard the slide and the swings and just trying to comprehend how someone could do something that evil.

There was a popular slogan among evangelicals at that time: "God loves you and has a perfect plan for your life." I remember driving past that place and the hairs on the back of my neck stood up and I was just thinking the opposite of that: Satan has a perfect plan for your life and this guy just executed it.

I mean, Satan's goal for all that bear the image of God, believer and non-believer alike, is ultimately death. And my guess is the enemy of our souls celebrated what took place in that house on that day. Jesus said of him: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

He was a murderer from the beginning and he revels in the death that James is warning us about. And just like he does for individuals he does for societies, I mean, the CDC reports that suicide itself that increased 36 percent since the year 2000. And

what seemed like an unbelievably monstrous event in 1998, it's become almost commonplace today. You read about these things, murders, suicides almost every day.

See, the vast majority of the world all around us is headed for the end game of temptation which is death. It may not be physically suicidal but spiritually it is nonetheless. Spiritually speaking, these folks were just cattle being fattened for the slaughter and it's crucial to the enemy that they remain ignorant. And so that's why the scripture in James is so critically important.

So to sum up what he's saying is your enemy relies on your ignorance of temptation not just to defeat you but to enslave and to ultimately kill you. Your enemy the devil lures and entices us by luring a false premise of something pleasurable to draw us out of our place of comfort and safety into a place of vulnerability. And whether the enemy makes you into a god or an animal, the goal is the same, to get you off center as a child of the living God. And the way to resist being lured and enticed is to understand, first of all, that you are being lured and enticed, and that when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin.

God's Holy Spirit also wants us to understand that our enemy's always going to start small and end big, and that end is not life,

it's death.

But we have to understand the other side for us. You know, Jesus fought the enemy in the desert 2,000 years ago, and he still fights the enemy today. When he was lead out into the desert, he stood in our place and literally faced down a monster. Three times he was tempted and three times how did he respond? He said, "It is written," "It is written," "It is written." Each time the enemy brought a new temptation, Jesus met that temptation and defeated by knowing exactly how the enemy worked and by responding with the very same weapon that we have: "It is written."

The word of God was Jesus' weapon in the desert; it's our weapon today. The enemy wants you ignorant of his ways but God says: *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.*

And how do we defeat the futility of our minds? We do it with God's word. And by the grace of his word and by the gift of his words, we are no longer ignorant.

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own*

*desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Let's pray.*

*Father, I thank you for your wisdom, I thank you for your word, I thank you that you want us to understand exactly how the enemy works, how he lures and entices us. I pray that you would give us the insight, the ability and the knowledge that we need to see that, to understand it, to know ahead of time a trap as it's being set up before it can lure and entice us. I pray for that grace, I pray for the wisdom, I pray for that insight, and I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.*