

*For the word of God is living and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates
even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*
~ Hebrews 4:12



The Blessings of Temptation

by Alan Medinger

Temptation, testing, trials—three T’s—are all quite closely related. Each involves going through a difficult experience that may have a good or a bad outcome. We all face them—perhaps Christians more than others—and it is probably safe to say we wish they weren’t a part of our lives. In fact, we ask God to “lead us not into temptation” whenever we say the Lord’s Prayer.

In a recent article I commented on how the idea that God sometimes leads us into temptation (as clearly implied in the Lord’s Prayer) puzzled me. Then a co-worker at Regeneration pointed out to me that God’s placement of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden had the purpose of tempting or testing Adam and Eve, as did Jesus “being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1). We can also add God’s allowing of terrible calamities to befall Job in order to test his faith as another example of God’s active involvement in man’s temptations.

Don’t these three situations—Adam and Eve in the garden, Jesus in the wilderness, and poor Job’s catastrophes—provide clear evidence that God does set us up to be tempted? Not really. Upon deeper reflection, I came to believe that God’s true purpose was to give Adam and Eve, His Son Jesus, and Job an opportunity to show and express their total obedience to Him and His Lordship over them. The temptation was a necessary by-product. When I took the training wheels off of my children’s bicycles, it was not to make them crash their bikes—although I knew it could happen and it did—but to teach them to ride a bike.

God did create the situations in which these people were tempted, but tempting them was not His *purpose*. His purpose was to let them demonstrate that they were in a right relationship with Him

On the subject of God tempting us or allowing us to be tempted, we are going to run head-on into the book of James where we read, “Let no one say I am tempted

by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one” (James 1:13). I believe that this verse is compatible with the temptations just mentioned because in each case *Satan* (or the serpent) was the tempter. God did not do the tempting but rather set up the situation where the devil could tempt Job, Adam and Eve and Jesus.

Although this is the subject for another article, it does point out the major role Satan plays in our

temptations. We talk about our battles with the world, the flesh and the devil, but how often do we really think of the devil’s role in our temptations?

So as God allowed Adam and Eve, Jesus and Job to be tempted and created the situations where Satan would be able to tempt them, does He do that today with us? I believe He does, and I believe He does for very good reasons.

TEMPTATIONS PRODUCE SUFFERING

Trials and temptations are by their nature negative experiences we don’t want to go through. Testing might be okay if we are the one in charge of the test, such as when we test our strength or our speed. Testing by another, however, especially by one who has authority

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over us, usually produces stress. Our negative reactions to trials, temptations and tests arise from two things. First, there is the painful struggle required to go through the test. Second, we face the possibility of a negative outcome: we will fail the test, yield to the temptation or be proven guilty in the trial. All of these situations are apt to produce suffering.

If God allows—or even arranges—for us to go through these experiences, what is His good reason in all this? Scripture gives one very clear answer in Romans 5:3-4: *“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through His Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*

We are told that Jesus was in every respect, *tempted as we are* (Hebrews 4:15), and that He *suffered when tempted* (Hebrews 2:18). We are also told that Jesus was made perfect (complete) through suffering (Hebrews 2:10). Going through suffering, including the suffering of temptation, was necessary

to bring Jesus to the place where He could fulfill His ultimate trial and testing on our behalf. If He needed this, how much more do we? We need our testing, trials and temptations in order to become true sons and daughters of the living God.

But couldn’t there be another way, one that was not so painful and difficult? No, there couldn’t. Oswald Chambers said it so well: “Faith must be tested, because it can be turned into a personal possession only through conflict” (*My Utmost for His Highest*, August 29).

TESTING, TEMPTATION AND TRIALS FOR THE SEXUALLY BROKEN AND ADDICTED

Testing, temptation and trials can take many forms, but for people in our ministry three types seem most common: the temptation to commit a sinful act, the temptation to avoid the pain caused by dealing with past experiences, and the temptation to rely on some source other than God to meet our deepest needs. In each situation, the struggle that ensues from the temptation, trial or testing can become the force that drives us to where we need to be to experience healing. Here is how we can be blessed in each of these situations:

1. Our temptation to commit sinful acts leads us to the help that we need. Our struggles with temptation keep bringing us back to Jesus, the ultimate source of our victory over sin. Sometimes He ministers His power to us directly, but more often, He ministers to us through other Christians—through the local church fellowship or through those in the body who are specially equipped to help with certain struggles. Many, however, are willing to go to Jesus, but not to other believers.

Countless numbers of Christians live under the power of same-sex attractions (SSA) or sex addiction but in their shame, they will not seek the help they need through other believers. Most people come to a ministry like Regeneration because they are Christians who are struggling with sinful sexual behavior, and they haven’t been able to deal with it successfully on their own. It could well be that God allows the temptations to continue until they are willing to break their isolation and seek help through His body—the church—through other Christian men and women. God may let their ongoing temptations lead such people to the desperate place where they are willing to let down the barriers and enter into deeper and more honest connections with other believers, into relationships in which healing can take place.

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Please Pray With Us . . .

THANKSGIVING

In our last newsletter, we highlighted **Jay and Ruth Wilson’s** situation with the premature birth of their new son. This month, join us in praising God for the miraculous ways He moved. **Gabriel Kenneth Wilson** was released from the NICU and is doing wonderfully. Ruth also is doing great! The family is all home again and adjusting to life with a family of six!

We also thank Him this month for the exciting new ministry opportunities He’s providing as we head into this year.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for **Josh Glaser** as he travels to Poland this spring to provide training for leaders starting a program for homosexual strugglers there. **Bob Ragan** may join him for this as well.

Please continue to pray with us for our participants—that they would come to see and know the Father as He really is, for resolve in breaking addictions and dependencies, for demonic deliverance, and for authentic inner healing. Thank you!

For more information or in-depth monthly prayer requests,
E-mail info@RegenerationMinistries.org.

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2. Our struggles lead us to deal with the pain from past experiences. People often ask me why they can't experience the kind of sudden healing from SSA that I experienced thirty-three years ago. After admitting that I don't know why God made it so easy for me, I tell them that their SSA struggles are just a symptom of deeper problems and that God is not interested in just taking away the symptoms. He wants us to experience true freedom and healing, not just changed behavior. To accomplish this we often have to deal with the wounds and sins from the past.

Dealing with situations where we were sinned against, such as the failure of a parent to fulfill his or her God-given role in our lives, or dealing with past abuse, can be extremely painful. Likewise, owning up to and dealing with our own sins that contributed to our brokenness can be terribly painful. Deep forgiveness of others, or deep repentance on our part, may be called for if we are to be healed. But quite commonly something in us powerfully resists such forgiveness or repentance. We often see people in counseling approach the deep issues that keep them in bondage then suddenly turn and flee from the counselor rather than walk through them. They often blame the counselor for some failure that made the counseling ineffective. When God sees there are issues that must be dealt with before we can find true freedom, He is willing to let the trials and testing continue to bring us into that place of healing.

3. Through our struggles we discover the futility of false solutions. Can I trust God to meet the needs that I am finding being met (albeit temporarily) through another person? Many don't believe they can. The single SSA woman who cannot tear herself away from her partner, who cannot stand the

thought of being alone—is she willing to trust God to meet her needs? Is the man, who for years has found his escape from the pains of life through sexual fantasy and masturbation, willing to trust God to take care of his rejection, loneliness or deep feelings of inadequacy? Often he is not. It is only after years of discovering these false solutions offer the briefest experience of relief and the underlying wounds getting deeper, that we are willing to go to the One who heals the broken heart. God will let us struggle until we are ready for the real solution—Himself.

Some years ago when I was in a men's Bible Study Fellowship group, we regularly sang the familiar hymn, "Trust and Obey." I liked the song. It described the Christian life in such clear and simple terms. All we needed to do to walk with the Lord and to grow in our love for Him was to *Trust* and *Obey*. As the song says, "There's no other way." I later recognized that the writer of the hymn had missed a third thing we must do to grow in our relationship with Him—worship. But trusting and obeying are vital, and it is through our trials, temptations and tests that we learn to trust and obey. These provide our training ground. Loving the Lord usually doesn't come about through an act of the will. As we trust and obey (and worship) Him, we will grow in our love for him. Perhaps this is the greatest blessing that can come from our trials, temptations and tests.

Does this mean that when we are tested or tempted we should shout, "Thank you Jesus!"? That's a good idea, but it's probably not in most of us to do so with real honesty.

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Regeneration Baltimore Banquet 2008

You are cordially invited to join us for an evening of food, music and story to benefit the ministry of Regeneration in Baltimore on **Friday, April 11th from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.** There is no cost to attend so come celebrate how Christ is changing lives once ensnared by sexual sin and brokenness, and invite others to learn about Regeneration—the Body of Christ needs to know!

Invitation to Join Our Banquet Team!

We need you to make the April 11th banquet a success! Here's how you can help:

- Sign up to be a Table Host: Commit to fill one or more table of 8 guests (does not require a financial commitment).
- Become a Table Sponsor: Cover the cost of one or more banquet table at \$500 per table.
- Sign up to join Banquet Operations: Help with set-up, take-down, seating, greeting, etc. the night of the banquet.

Contact 410-661-0284 or info@RegenerationMinistries.org.

FINANCIAL COLUMN AND MINISTRY NEWS

Financing the Ring and the Robe

At the start of 2008, we are fully funded and moving forward eager for what lays ahead in this New Year. We cannot say enough how grateful we are to those of you who put your money behind this ministry . . .

Consider the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11ff). It is the story of a man restored from sexual sin, and it is a story about money. The son “squanders” half his father’s estate. Yet when he comes home, his father falls all over him, kissing him. He commands his servants to bring the best robe to wrap his boy in, a ring for his hand, and sandals for his feet. The son has returned hoping at best to be a day-laborer, but the father restores him to sonship.

Like the older brother, you’ve heard that daughters and sons are returning, seeking help to deal with sexual immorality. When you give to Regeneration, you participate in the Father’s heart, saying in essence, “Father, here! Here’s my ring, here are my sandals, take my robe!”

Thank you for your hearts of compassion for the prodigal sons and daughters who come to Regeneration. Thank you for giving from what the Father has given you—whether large or small—for their restoration.

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We will be helped to endure the temptation and cause it to have a good outcome if we remember that temptations are a normal part of the Christian life rather than a penalty singled out on us for our perversity. Remember that God does have good purposes for our temptations and He will bring good out of them.

One of the most familiar Scripture passages dealing with temptation is 1 Corinthians 10:13: “*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*” I used to think there was a bit of conflict here. God wants us to endure it, but He promises escape from it. Which is it? It’s both. God wants us to endure our temptations, because this produces character and other good qualities in us (Romans 5:3-4). At the same time, the knowledge that this temptation will not go on forever helps us to endure it until God lifts it from us. But meanwhile, in our enduring it, God is doing His good work in us. ■

Returning Sons and Daughters Conference

Join us on Friday evening March 7th and Saturday March 8th for *Returning Sons and Daughters*, featuring **Mario Bergner**. Co-sponsored by Regeneration and the Falls Church, the conference will lay a foundation for discovering our identity in Jesus Christ and will address key aspects of sexuality that must be attended to in order for men and women to find wholeness in their sexuality. The conference location is The Falls Church in Falls Church, Virginia.

If you live in the Northern Virginia area, keep an eye on your mailbox for additional news about this great opportunity.

For more information or to register, contact Regeneration’s administrative office at info@RegenerationMinistries.org or 410-661-0284.

Regeneration Is . . .

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Group Meetings

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- Living Waters
- New Beginnings (Sexual Addiction Group)
- New Directions
- Growth Into Manhood
- Wives’ Group

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- Living Waters
- Women’s Group
- Wives’ Group
- Men’s Group
- s.a.l.t. (Sexual Addiction Group)