

The Fatal Finish

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"And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:15.

The human race is not in total ignorance of the power and penalty of sin, for God has given a full revelation of sin in the Scriptures, and through the word preached by His ministers. Sin is the eternal enemy of God, and the foe of all good. Sin is ever moving to one final finish—Death. The sentence of death was passed upon all men in the fall of Adam, and the second death is the final penalty for all who reject the redemption provided in Jesus.

In the Scripture under consideration, James discloses some startling facts about the seduction of a soul; he shows how the Tempter appeals to his intended victim, and what the fatal finish is of all who yield.

I. Sin Chosen. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." (Ver. 14).

The fact that every man is tempted does not imply that every man must yield to the Tempter; neither does it imply that the tempted man has sin in his heart when he is tempted. The temptation of a holy man is the matter for consideration in this study. We find the answer to three questions which are often raised: Who is the Tempter, and what is the purpose of God in permitting His saints to be tempted to sin, if there is no sin in the heart?

The answer to the first question is: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." (Ver. 13). Evidently the Tempter is not God, but Satan, whose sinister plan is to accomplish our eternal ruin in the second death.

The answer to the second question is: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." (Ver. 12) The Lord designs that His people that endure temptation shall have a proving of their love, and in that proving they shall be counted worthy of the crown of life. He will not let them be tried. "Above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it." (I Cor. 10:13).

We are now to consider the problem of the approach of the Tempter to seduce a holy person. James reveals that the appeal of Satan is made through the desires: the man is tempted, "When he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." By lust is meant desire; the desire may be perfectly natural and normal, such as the desire for food, or knowledge, or possessions. The word "lust" is taken from a Greek word meaning "to long for," or "to set the heart upon." It may be a desire for something evil and unlawful, and it may be a desire for something pertaining to normal life and love. Jesus used the word saying, "With desire I have desired to eat the passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15).

Every sanctified person is tempted through the natural desires. The basic desires of humanity are not removed by the grace of God. They are purified and put under the dominion of the will aided by the Holy Spirit. We find this true in the temptation of the Savior. He fasted forty days, and the Word says, "He was afterward an hungered." Jesus

had the natural hunger for food, and evidently felt keenly this hunger when the Tempter drew attention to it.

It is through the desires that the drawing away is felt. The man is drawn by the alluring offer of Satan to give him the thing he wants. So long as the man tempted does not yield his will he has not sinned; for the sin is not committed in the drawing, but in the decision to obtain in an unlawful way. In Matt. 5:28, the looking upon the woman to lust after her, involves both the desire and the decision to commit the act. The act has been committed in the heart.

The decision to sin, is in itself a deed of sin, even if the desire leading up to it was never gratified. Satan cannot force a decision, but he can present the allurements that effect a drawing force upon the tempted one. We must resist him steadfast in the faith; we must not yield to any offer he makes. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." We do not need to go to Satan for anything needful to our happiness and spiritual welfare. Our Lord was clothed, fed, and comforted, without Satan's help; so may we expect such supplies from our Heavenly Father.

II. Sin Conceived. "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin."

From this statement of James, we see what has taken place in the soul that chooses to sin in order to gratify desires in an unlawful manner. Through lust, sin is conceived in the heart. The emphasis is upon the word, "conceive" as it relates to sin. It is the same word used in Luke 1:24, "His wife Elizabeth conceived," speaking of the promise made to Zacharias. James reveals the terrible result of consenting to accept Satan's offers; sin is begotten in the soul. The Scripture before us discloses all the fact of a seduction. The person seduced, having yielded to the will of the Seducer, has conceived depravity, the child of Satan in the soul.

Yielding to the Tempter to do evil is to engage in an act of illicit love; it means to

I MET GOD IN THE MORNING

I met God in the morning

When the day was at its best,
And His presence came like sunrise

Like a glory in my breast.

All day long His presence lingered.

All day long He stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness

On every troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered,

Other ships were sore distressed,
And the wind that seemed to blow them

Brought to us both peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,

With a deep remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings

With His presence left behind.

Now I think I know the secret,

Learned from many a troubled way—

You must meet God in the morning,

If you want Him through the day.

—Selected.

take love from its high and holy purpose, and prostitute it in an unholy relationship with the Devil. Love for God is to be proven in the trial, and not to be perverted to an evil alliance with Satan. The shocking truth is, that when one does yield to Satan, after having been cleansed from indwelling sin, sin is again implanted in the heart, and that sin is the illegitimate child of an unholy liaison with the Devil.

In this we find the answer to the question, How does depravity re-enter the soul that was one time made free from it? When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. To bring forth means to beget. Satan begets the sin in the soul.

III. Sin Completed. "And sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death."

The depravity begotten in the soul comes to its birth, and the evil thing that is brought forth is death. This son of Satan is a born killer. It destroys every good word and work of both man and God. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Sin completely destroys relationships. One of the first effects of the fall of Adam was his banishment from the garden, where he had walked with God. The result of the cleansing through the Blood of Christ is "We have fellowship one with another." This relationship is the first thing that sin breaks in its killing work. The soul is aware that the Presence of God has departed, and darkness and defeat reign in the heart. A horrible void, a terrifying emptiness, a sense of frustration torments the fallen soul, and rest is only a memory and peace is a thing of the past.

Life under such conditions becomes dreary existence; the defeated soul must sail the uncharted sea of life without a Captain and a compass, being carried to the fatal finish in the second death. He walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded the eyes of the mind. A kind of creeping paralysis steals over the soul, and all the powers of resistance slowly cease, and the soul is fast drifting to eternal death, sin is completing its deadly work.

Sin completely destroys the reputation. Our moral standing in the church, and in the community is of great riches. Who can measure the influence of godly persons? We can feel the effects of their lives long after they have gone to glory. Sin is no respecter of persons. It will destroy all persons that indulge in it.

For a few moments of sinful pleasure, a man can kill the reputation of a lifetime. He will see the work of years fall in ruins about him, wrecked by his indulging a passion for one fleeting moment in evil. Those who are enticed by the folly of sin, may not expect to escape the fatal finish of sin. They can find favor and forgiveness in the mercy of God, but this will not prevent the harvest of their evil sowings. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." This law is inexorable. No man can evade the punishment implied in the reaping.

Even if the fallen soul is pardoned and purified, and fully restored to God, the evil he did can not be recalled, neither can it be prevented from its work of death. David was recovered from his fall, but his recovery did not bring Uriah back to life. Knowing these things let us watch and pray. Let us be sober and vigilant, because the Adversary, "as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."—The American Holiness Journal.