

VISIBLE TRUTH IN THE FACE OF TEMPTATIONS

This week, I have been thinking about how difficult it is to live the straight and narrow type of life. It is such a challenge that one can easily give up because the onslaught is real – the arrows keep flying in. How many of us agree with these sentiments.

These sentiments are going to be the subject matter of my talk this morning. I want to talk to you on the topic **VISIBLE TRUTH IN THE FACE OF TEMPTATIONS**.

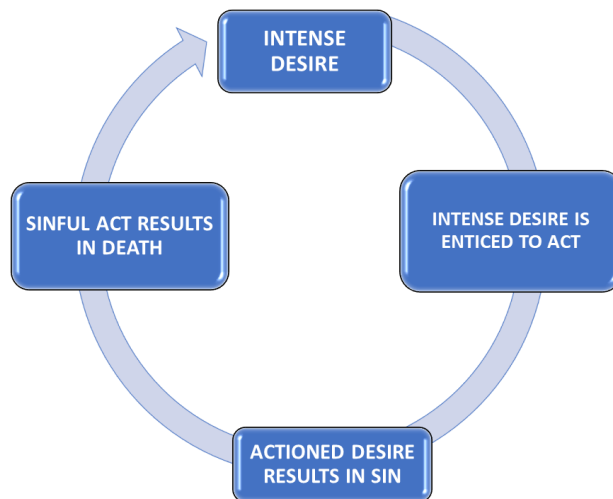
What do you do in the face of a temptation ridden atmosphere, everywhere you look, you are bound to be tempted into doing something ungodly. How does one live out his or her truth in the face of such adversity and opposition? To make it worse, the world around you is watching you; your neighbours are watching you, your work mates are watching you, your teammates are watching – they all want to see your Christianity shining through.

James 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.

- In one of our teachings, we spoke about visible truth in the face of trials, and we learnt from James that trials are good for us as they are meant to refine our faith in God.
- From the verse we have read, James brings up the issue of temptations – if you are not careful, you might mistake trials for temptations and yet they are totally different.
- One of the major differences between trials and temptations is this; God tests you in the hope that you will pass the test, whereas Satan tempts you with the hope that you fail.
- This is a major difference between the two and it is a truth that you need to internalise and believe. It will determine how you respond to these 2 issues.
- To overcome this thing called temptation, we need to have a better understanding of how it operates. How does temptation operate?
- There is a mechanism through which temptation operates and James gives us a powerful insight into the mechanism, when he said that each person falls into temptation the moment their own desire draws them towards a sinful act.

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- It starts with an intense desire in your heart for something.
- The forceful nature of the desire causes you to act when an opportunity presents itself.
- A desire that is acted out, results in a sinful act.
- A full-blown sin results in death



- This is best explained by a fish that is enticed by a bait and drawn out by the hook.
- Several years ago, I went on holiday with 3 friends, Johan, Stephan and Mark. It ended up being a fishing holiday in a place called Inhambane in Mozambique.
- Most of the time there, we were on the water fishing – in front here, I have a fishing rod. To catch fish, you have to place a bait on the hook attached at the end of the fishing rod.
- The bait is either a living organism or an artificial object that mimics a bait – all this is meant to attract the fish to take a bite. The moment the fish bites the bait, it also bites the hook, and the fisherman starts reeling it in.
- We caught a lot of fish on this trip – as you can see.
- The fish that is caught by the fishermen, is that which is hungry – in other words fish that is not hungry, normally does not get enticed by the bait.
- I want you to picture yourself as the fish, swimming the deep waters of the Indian ocean, or rather swimming in the deep waters of the world.
- Your desire is equivalent to the state of the tummy of the fish – a hungry fish is a person that has a burning desire.

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- The bait is the temptation being dangled in front of you by the enemy but alongside the bait is the hook of death.
- The desire in your heart, is not a normal one, it is a desire born out of your carnal or corrupt nature.
- Let me tell you that, everyone has and was born with this lustful nature.
- When you got born again, your spirit man was regenerated but your carnal nature remained in place.
- When you do not deal with your carnal nature and you pay attention to it, your soulish nature becomes alive and craves to be fed.
- That is why the Bible says put to death your old man or your carnal nature.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, the components of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.

Romans 8: 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be...13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

- When you dwell on lustful thoughts, when you dwell on hurtful thoughts, when you are obsessed with promotion at work, you are arousing a desire in you that is simply waiting for the right bait to come your way.
- If you are obsessed with promotion and want it at all costs, you will easily fall for a boss who says “one night with you, it will get you the corner office”.
- Using our analogy, the obsessive desire for a promotion is the hunger pangs in the fish, the boss who offers one night stand is the bait and the hook is the sin.
- You sleep with the boss, you commit sin and the fisherman reels you in for food – in other words when sin has matured, it results in death.
- As a student, passing your academics must be your first priority but when you are obsessed with passing, you will end up doing anything possible in order to pass.
- When passing becomes an obsession (a picture of a hungry fish), and someone comes and offers you a leaked exam paper (bait/temptation), you will fall for it because the temptation is speaking to the idol in your heart.

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- Your obsessed mindset makes you vulnerable to enticement – your will power to say no to the bait is weakened.
- Jesus talks about the origin of sin in *Matthew 12:35 The good man brings good things out of his good store of treasure, and the evil man brings evil things out of his evil store of treasure.*
- The big question is this – how does one overcome temptation?
- We cannot wish away temptation – it is a matter of when and not an if. You cannot stop birds from flying over your head, but you can stop birds making a nest on top of your head.
- This is the heart of the matter; no temptation can trip you if there is no appetite for it in your heart.
- Jesus tells His disciples about His pending death and said in *John 14:30 I shall no longer speak many things with you, for the ruler of this world comes, and he has nothing in Me.*
- The devil was coming after Jesus, but Jesus had nothing of the devil in Him which could give Satan the right to overpower him.
- Jesus died not because the enemy killed Him but because He laid down His own life.
- When we carry what belongs to the devil, we give him the legal power and right to trip us because we have what belongs to him.
- You overcome temptation when you have nothing of the devil in your possession.
- You have a choice to either live by the old (worldly) operating system or by the new (spirit led) operating system.

1 John 5:4 For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

- A regenerated child of God ought to live according to the spirit – it's only those who are born of the spirit that are able to overcome the system of this world.
- Every time you live according to the system of the world, you become vulnerable and an easy target of that system.
- Like any operating system, it is possible to be contaminated by viruses – usually viruses are transmitted from one computer to another using memory sticks.

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- What you feed your mind with; determines the type of hunger you will have. The more you feed your flesh (soulish nature), the hungrier you are for the things of the world.

Philippians 2: 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think on these things.

- Get into the word, make praying a habit, enjoy the fellowship of other believers and you will silence the hunger for worldly things.