

“When Desire Has Conceived”

28

From Glory to Glory



Character development is said to be the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. During the next hour, we will explore both our privilege and our responsibility to become Christ-like in character. Join us now for this powerful time of personal renewal as Pastor Stephen Wallace takes us "From Glory to Glory."

Thank you for coming, and giving me the privilege of continuing in our study of what saith the Lord on the most important work ever entrusted to human beings, character building, character building. How's it going, the memorization of that first statement? I want to inculcate that into your minds, bless your hearts. **Education, page 225**, say it with me: **"Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now."**

Please, we are approaching the end of this seminar, but I hope, I pray, that it will not be the end of your study of the topic. I pray that it will be just the beginning actually, that this seminar will serve as a catalyst to help you do much further personal study in this ultimately important topic of character building. You see, we can be neither effective witnesses for the king nor fit citizens for the kingdom unless we have a Christ-like character. My brother, my sister, since the King is coming soon, it is imperative, it is absolutely essential that we learn how to cooperate with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the development of a Christ-like character.

In our last couple of studies, we have been focusing our attention on the role of the will. We've come to recognize that its role is absolutely crucial and central, and that is only to be expected, after all, **the will is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, the power of choice.** {SC 47.1} Everything we will to do, we will do; and if the will is not under the governance of God, we are not under the governance of God. If the will is under the governance of God, **we can, in Christ's strength {Phil 4:13}**, overcome the opposition factor that we must all contend with: the flesh with all of its lusts and its ally, which is Satan and the kingdom of darkness; and of course the world, and all that is in the world, is custom-designed by Satan to goad on and encourage fleshly lusts, isn't it? So we've got a pretty significant opposition factor to contend with, as those who are fleshly by nature and live in this world that is so calculated to promote fleshly lusts: **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.** {1 Jn 2:16}

Now, what I want to do tonight is really focus specifically on the role of the will when it comes to overcoming temptation. Is it important to know how to overcome temptation, my dear friends? Absolutely... if you ever are tempted to think that it is not important to learn how to be an overcomer, to the point of **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ {2 Cor 10:5}**, and refusing, for the love of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to indulge even at the level of our thoughts, temptation... If you're ever tempted to conclude that it's not important to know how to do that, I beg of you to recognize that all of those marvelous promises in Revelation are made to whom? **"He that overcomes."** **"He that,"** what? **"...overcomes."** {Rev 2 and 3} My dear friends, those are wonderful promises, but we are only presumptuous if we think that we are going to enjoy any of those promises without having learned to be overcomers. Do I hear an "amen"? This is not optional, bless your hearts, it is absolutely crucial and essential. We must be overcomers, we must. And the role of the will is so central, so essential, when it comes to overcoming temptation, and I want to really focus on that very carefully. We're dealing with a very spiritual topic tonight, and since **spiritual things are**

only spiritually discerned {1 Cor 2:13-14}, we must begin our study with prayer. Right? ...as is our practice. Please remember your brother as you pray for yourself.

Father God, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness, I thank You that we have access to Your ear and to Your heart. I thank You that You see us, and accept us, in the Beloved; and indeed You love us as much as You love Your own Son. Amazing grace, what a precious provision... ..and so Father we come asking, not because we think You need to be coaxed or convinced to bless us, we know that You long to bless us; we come asking, rather, because we need to be reminded and remind ourselves, of our desperate need. And we must ask because the economy of heaven operates on the simple principle, "Ask and it shall be given." Because only thereby can You give us what You long to give us without violating our choice, our free will. You knock at the door; You don't force Yourself in. But hearing that knock, we choose to open the door and say, "Come in, please." In the person of Your Spirit, quicken and energize our mental and spiritual faculties. Enable us, not only to understand the truth, but to love it - and most importantly, to choose to stand under the truth, to yield to it. Father it's one thing to understand it; it's quite another to stand under it. We need to learn to yield our wills to the truth, and the claims of Him who is the Truth. Teach us how to do that tonight, and as I lead out in this study, please anoint my lips, guide my thoughts, indite my every word. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are where? On page 61, Lesson 28. Title: **"When Desire Has Conceived" {Jas 1:15}** The more familiar King James Version of that verse says, **"When lust hath conceived..."** My friends, very, very important topic tonight. Please give your **undivided attention {3MR 321.1}** to the study of the word of God. Any study on temptation and how to overcome it would lead us to the book of James, wouldn't it? James probably more than any other Biblical author that I know of, focuses on temptation, the anatomy of temptation. The process by which temptation becomes sin and how we can keep temptation from becoming sin; and by the way, please understand that it is absolutely necessary to know precisely how, and when, temptation becomes sin if we are going to know how we can keep temptation from becoming sin. Does that make sense to you? Is it important to know how to keep temptation from becoming sin? Oh, yes, it is. Therefore, it's very important to understand precisely what it is that causes temptation to become sin.

Is it a sin to be tempted? No, it's not. Well, at what point does temptation become sin? Most people think that temptation doesn't become sin until you... commit the act. Is that the case? Most emphatically, no, it is not. This is so important to understand, my dear friends. So, we are going to let James help us come to a precise, accurate, correct understanding of how it is that temptation becomes sin. Let's begin our study by looking at James 1:12, **James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."** Very interesting; remarkable truth enfolded in that simple verse.

First of all, notice that **we are blessed when we what? ...endure temptation.** In other words, temptation has the potential of being a blessing, doesn't it? But what makes it a blessing or not? It's whether or not we endure it, whether or not we overcome it. And please notice that enduring temptation, is not only a blessing, but it is essential to prove us or to test us. That's what he means when he says, **"For when he has been approved."** You see, our faith and our love for Christ must be ratified as genuine if we are going to be entrusted with the crown of life. What kind of life is God going to entrust us with? - eternal life; and my dear friends, please know that God cannot entrust just anyone with eternal life. Who alone can He entrust with eternal life? - only those who are permanently and irrevocably through with sin. Do I hear an "amen?" {Amen} You see, if we haven't come to the place where we would actually rather, what? ...die than sin, we cannot be entrusted with eternal life. Because God, when He takes us to heaven, doesn't render us incapable of sinning. We still have, technically, the capacity to sin, but we never will. Why? Because we have been tried and tested on planet earth and we have given irrefutable evidence that we are so much in love with Christ, and

therefore hate sin so much, that we would gladly lay down our lives rather than knowingly sin; and that makes us safe to entrust with eternity. Are we all together on that? **"for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who,"** what? **"...love Him."** ...love Him how much? ...love Him so much that they would rather die than disobey and disappoint and misrepresent Him.

Review and Herald, December 6, 1881: "Our faith," and we might add as well, as she does later in this statement -our love- **"Our faith must be tested in this world. Christ overcame in our behalf, and thus made it possible for us also to overcome. We must endure trial and temptation here, and then, if faithful, we shall receive the crown. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life.' We shall be exposed to manifold temptations, but these, if rightly borne, will refine and purify us, even as gold is purified in the fire."** Pause. Do you see here the potential blessing there is in temptation? What does it do? It purifies us. It refines our faith and love by testing it in the fire. Reading on: **"Yet when exposed to the allurements of the world, that which we had thought to be gold, proves to be but dross. Our Redeemer sees the situation, and He counsels all to buy of Him gold tried in the fire {Rev 3:18}; which is true faith and,"** what? **"...genuine love, the grace that will not be destroyed by fierce temptations."**

Please see what's going on here, my dear friends. We are often convinced that we are stronger than we really are, and so to alert us to our vulnerability and our weakness, what does God allow us to be? ...tempted, tested, tried to bring to our attention our weaknesses. Why is that so important? Because He's trying to get us ready, first of all, to pass through an intensive time of trial and testing, called **"the time of trouble."** {GC, chap. 39} But also He is seeking to refine and purify our faith and our love, develop our character, in other words, so that we can be entrusted with eternal life. So with all these things in mind, we can see, I trust, how it is that temptation endured is truly a blessing, isn't it? It's a blessing.

Now, please notice that as James moves into an analysis of the actual process of temptation, the first thing that he is eager to do, is make sure we know that God is not directly responsible for our being tempted. God is not what? "...directly" responsible. Please note the qualifying word there. Notice how James puts it in verse 13, **James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God;' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."** Very clearly God does not tempt us Himself, directly, by evil, with evil. But please note, just as clearly, Scripture indicates that God allows us to be tempted. God does not tempt us, but He what? He allows us to be tempted; and why does He allow us to be tempted? Precisely because of the potential blessing that comes when, in His strength, we endure it. Are you with me?

Now, notice **1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful..."** praise His name! **"God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."** I love that promise! Isn't that a precious promise? Praise God for that promise. You see, my dear friends, why does God allow us to be tempted? Well, because He wants us, by overcoming temptation, to be the stronger for having done so.

Ask any body-builder. How is it that he develops physical muscle and sinew? He overcomes the resistance of those weights. Right? ...and every time he does that, what happens to his physical muscles? ...they get stronger! So it is with temptation, and the development of our spiritual muscle and sinew. Every time we overcome temptation, we get what? ...spiritually stronger for having done so. It's a wonderful workout. But praise God, that in this spiritual body-building, if you like, we have a coach who knows just where we're at; and He knows what we -at that point in our spiritual maturity and

development- can handle; and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle at that point. Isn't that good to know? {Amen}

You see, I like to think of this very literally. If we are in Christ, nothing can reach us except that it be allowed by Christ. So here comes the devil with a temptation. But I am where? I am in Christ. So before the devil can even tempt me, what has he got to do? He's got to get Christ to allow him to do that. Right? Because nothing can reach me, being in Christ, except Christ what? ...allows it; I'm in Him. Do you see a very literal picture here? So when the enemy comes along with a temptation, Christ says, *"Wait a minute, what do you have in mind there? I want to know whether Steve at this present point in his spiritual development, is up to that."* If it is a temptation that I can handle at that point of my development and maturity, what does Christ say? *"Okay, have at him."* Why? Because of the blessing that I will receive as I overcome that temptation in His strength. He will never allow me to be tempted beyond what I am able. How can you go wrong with a coach like that by your side? You can't.

Listen. **Signs of the Times, December 18, 1893: "Temptation is not sin, and is no indication that God is displeased with us. The Lord suffers us..."** That's an old-fashioned word for what? ...allows. **"The Lord suffers us to be tempted, but He measures every temptation, and apportions it according to our power to resist and overcome evil. It is in time of trial and temptation that we are enabled to measure the degree of our faith and trust in God, and to estimate the stability of our Christian character. If we are easily jostled and overcome, we should be alarmed; for our strength is small."** Pause here, my dear friends. Do you see what we're being told here? Christ allows us to be tempted, not only for the blessing that is potentially ours as we overcome it, but He allows us to be tempted to help us realize how weak we are, and how desperately we need to work out those spiritual muscles and get stronger. You see, please understand that if you can't handle a five-pound temptation, you're in big trouble down the road when they're going to be 200-pound temptations that you've got to handle. Are you following this? And Jesus wants you to start working out, so that when the going really gets rough, you'll be able to handle it in His strength; and we should be alarmed if we collapse under five-pound temptations. Alarmed!

Back to our statement: **"Let us consider the words of comfort that have been left on record for our instruction: 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.'" {1 Cor 10:13}** Now I love this sentence: **"God has apportioned the temptation in proportion to the strength He can supply, and He never permits us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist or to endure. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.'" {2 Pet 2:9}** Can you say, "Praise God," brother, sister?

You know, I can't think of anything that speaks more convincingly, regarding the sovereignty of God, than the fact that He can take our worst enemy's best efforts to ruin us and turn them into our greatest blessings. Think of it! Can you imagine how that must frustrate and infuriate Satan? When he comes along with a temptation that he wants so badly to cause us to stumble and fall and yet we, in dependence upon Christ use it, and we don't stumble, we use it as a stepping-stone? And it lifts us closer to Christ, makes us more like Him, and makes us stronger. Can you imagine how that must frustrate and infuriate him, Satan? I ask you my dear friends, **with such a God for us, who can be against us? {Rom 8:31}** If He can take our worst enemy's best efforts to destroy us and turn them into some of our greatest blessings, how can you go wrong? Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} You can't go wrong with such a God at your side! Please make sure you're in Him though. Make sure you're in Him. Okay?

Back to our James passage: So if temptation doesn't come directly from God, where does it come from? {Satan} Some of you jumped with two feet right into my trap, and all of you thought it,

even though you might not have had the courage to say it. Instinctively when we ask where temptation comes from, people think what? - Satan, the devil, of course. We all know that temptation comes from the devil; are you sure? Please notice something very significant here. Notice that in this in-depth analysis of temptation, notice whose name isn't even mentioned. And the second thing I want you to notice is five, and I want you to write them neatly in the verse itself - in fact, you could do it in your Bible and have it there for keeps - five stages or steps that are involved in the temptation process. Okay? Here we go. We're looking for two things. What's the first? Whose name isn't mentioned? What's the second? Five stages in the temptation process.

James 1:14, "But each one is tempted when..." stage one: **"...he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."** Verse 15: **"Then..."** stage two: **"when desire has,"** what? **"conceived,"** stage three: **"it gives birth to sin; and sin,"** stage four: **"when it is full-grown,"** stage five: **"brings forth death."** {Jas 1:14-15} Did you get the five stages? Did you note them? They're very important to note. This is an amplified version of the simple truth that Paul gives us: **The wages of sin is death.** {Rom 6:23} James takes us to what happens before sin and he fills in the details that lead us to final death. Okay? What are the five stages?

Stage one: **"Drawn away by his own desires and enticed."** We'll call this "seduction." Did you catch that class? We'll call this what? "Seduction."

Stage two: **"When desire has conceived;"** we'll call that "conception." Logical name.

Stage three: **"It gives birth to sin;"** we'll call that "birth." Okay?

Stage four: **"When it is full grown;"** we'll call that "growth."

Stage five: **"It brings forth,"** what? **"Death;"** that's "death." Okay?

Did you get the five stages? Seduction, conception, birth, growth, death. Okay? Those are the five stages. Now, whose name wasn't even mentioned? Tell me, whose name isn't even there? Satan, the devil, he's not even mentioned. Interesting. Is that because Satan isn't at all involved in temptation? No. No, I would never suggest that. Why then, is James not even mentioning Satan in this in-depth analysis of the temptation process? Why? Well, could it be, could it possibly be that James is trying to protect us from our all too human tendency when we yield to temptation, to say, *"The devil made me do it?"* *"The devil made me do it."* You see, he [James] is fully aware of the tendency of human nature, he has one himself. And right from the very beginning, when the Lord God turns to the woman, and says, **"What is this you have done?"** What does she say? **"The serpent deceived me and I did eat."** {Gen 3:13} *"The devil made me do it;"* and we've been doing that ever since.

By the way, do you remember... Those of you who are of the same vintage I am, do you remember there used to be t-shirts and bumper stickers, really popular, that said, *"The devil made me do it?"* Some actor came up with that as a favorite line. But you know, it wasn't the actor that came up with it. It was the devil that came up with it. My dear friends, do you think the devil gets upset when we blame him for our sinning? Do you? No, he is absolutely thrilled. Why? Because if we blame him, we don't know where the problem really lies. Come on now. We don't know where the problem really lies, and if we don't know where the problem really lies, we're not going to get help with it, are we? ...and we're not going to go for the solution; and I think that that's why James didn't even mention the devil's name. Okay.

Temptation: Please know, we cannot say when we yield to it that *"the devil made me do it."* Why? Because the devil is not allowed, on account of the restraining influence of the Lord God upon him, to force anyone to yield to temptation. Unless, of course, that person absolutely determinedly refuses the restraining, gracious influence of the Lord God and commits the unpardonable sin, and sells

his soul to Satan. Then Satan has control and can force the demon-possessed to do things that they might not even want to do.

Testimonies, Volume 2, page 294; bottom of page 61: **"It is true that Satan is the great originator of sin; yet this does not excuse any man for sinning; for he cannot force men to do evil." He cannot what? ...force men to do evil. "He tempts them to and, and makes sin look enticing and pleasant; but he has to leave it to their own wills whether they will do it or not."** Are we all together on this? Can we then, honestly, legitimately say when we yield to temptation, *"The devil made me do it"*? No, we cannot. Satan has to leave it to our own wills, whether we will do it or not. So again, where does temptation come from? It comes from two sources, two sources. **Mount of Blessings, page 116: "Temptation is enticement to sin, and this does not proceed from God..."** that's the first thing James established, **"but from Satan,"** number one, **"and,"** number two, **"from the,"** what? **"...the evil of our own hearts."**

Now work with me on this. Temptation comes from where? From Satan and from what? ...the evil of our own hearts. But please understand that most frequently temptation comes from the evil of our own hearts. Yes, perhaps stirred up by Satan, but nevertheless it comes from where? From our own fallen, fleshly nature, the lower corrupt nature called the flesh - that doesn't reign in the Christian, but still what? ...remains. ...doesn't preside, but still resides, and is not content to just remain--wants to what? ...reign. Thus Paul's exhortation: **"Therefore, let not sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts."** {Rom 6:12}

Now, the first source of temptation, very interesting, Satan. Evidently, although this is not the norm, this is the exception. Evidently, Satan is able to directly implant in the mind, evil thoughts; and there's a remarkable statement here that I want to quickly share with you because it's so insightful. It's found in **Manuscript Release, Volume 2, page 343-344: "A few hours ago I listened to the complaints of a distressed soul. Satan came to her in an unexpected way."** Pause. Is this the norm for Satan's M.O. when it comes to tempting? It's not the norm, no. **"Satan came to her in,"** a what? **"...in an unexpected way."** This is an exception, in other words. Reading on: **"She thought that she had blasphemed the Saviour because the tempter kept putting into her mind the thought that Christ was only a man, no more than a good man. She thought that Satan's whisperings were the sentiments of her own heart, and this horrified her. She thought that she was denying Christ, and her soul was in an agony of distress. I assured her that these suggestions of the enemy were not her own thoughts, that Christ understood and accepted her; that she must treat these suggestions as wholly from Satan; and that her courage must rise with the strength of the temptation. She must say, 'I am a child of God. I commit myself, body and soul, to Jesus. I hate these vain thoughts.' I told her not to admit for a moment that they originated with her; not to allow Satan to wound Christ by plunging her into unbelief and discouragement. To those who are thus tempted..."** Pause. Evidently there are others that are tempted this way. I know I have been tempted this way. **"To those who are thus tempted, I would say, Do not for a moment acknowledge Satan's temptations as being in harmony with your own mind. Turn from them as you would from the adversary himself."** That is one way that Satan tempts us, by directly implanting into our minds evil thoughts. He bypasses the old man; he just puts a thought right there. Okay? Now that, I believe though, is not the most common form of temptation.

What is the most common form of temptation? Satan most commonly tempts us by stimulating our own perverted selfish, depraved appetites and passions through sensory input that comes into the mind through the senses. Did you follow that? That is by far the most prevalent form of temptation. Now, Satan is involved but really, in a very real sense, he could pack his bags and go home, wherever that is, and most people wouldn't even notice a difference. Why? Because the world is absolutely overflowing with sensory, sensual, carnal, materialistic, egotistic input, isn't it? Everywhere you look, everything you hear, everything you see, in this world is calculated to stimulate **the lusts of the flesh,**

the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. {1 Jn 2:16} Isn't it? ...and that's the case because **Satan is the prince of this world {Jn 14:30; Eph 2:2}**, and he's set it up that way, intentionally.

Now, notice this statement; **Manuscript 47, 1896: "Often Satan conquers us by our natural inclinations and appetites." - by our what? "Our natural inclinations and appetites." "These were divinely appointed, and when given to man were pure and holy,"**

Remember, we--pause here--we've been through that. In the Garden of Eden, what did Satan appeal to in our first parents? **Eve saw that the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes, desirable to make one wise. {Gen 3:6}** Those were God-given capacities to enjoy sensory pleasure in a lawful, legitimate way, to enjoy the acquisition of beautiful things, delight to the eyes, and to enjoy self-improvement for the glory of God, desirable to make one wise. Those were un sinful, indeed holy, God-given desires. But what happened when our first parents indulged those in a sinful way? They became what? Perverted and depraved; they became unholy, and now they're called, **"fleshly lusts which war against the soul." {1 Pet 2:11}** Now they're called **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. {1 Jn 2:16}** You remember that study? **{Lesson 21, p. 4}** Just wanted to refresh your mind on that.

Now, back to our statement: **"Often Satan conquers us by our natural inclinations and appetites. These were divinely appointed, and when given to man, were pure and holy, but men's natural appetites have been perverted by indulgence. Through unholy gratification they have become 'fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' {1 Pet 2:11} Unless the Christian watches unto prayer, he gives loose reign to habits, which should be overcome. Unless he feels the need of constant watching, ceaseless vigilance, his inclinations, abused and misguided, will be the means of his backsliding from God."** Oh, my dear friends, be warned and be on the alert. This is why Paul is so concerned, even as a mature Christian, even in the closing hours of his godly life, he's so concerned; and he pummels his body and **he keeps it under, lest he what? Be disqualified. {1 Cor 9:27}** He's acutely aware of that potential, and so must we be.

Now, the reason - please understand this as well - the reason that Satan gets so much mileage out of... this type of temptation, is because of the very real pleasure that indulgence affords. Did you catch that? Particularly in the area of the lusts of the flesh, which is what? ...appetite and passion. Does it give sensory pleasure to indulge appetite and passion? Does it? Obviously, obviously. Who made that a pleasurable experience? Whose idea was that? - God's, and what Satan does, is that he piggy-backs on a God-given gift, and he gets us, through unlawful, selfish, over-indulgence, to self-destruct! Just wringing all the sensory pleasure we can out of so doing. Are you hearing what I'm telling you? And my dear friends, particularly in the area of appetite and passion, Satan has gotten incredible mileage, hasn't he? ...and the vast majority in this world, are busily self-destructing through self-indulgence in these areas, but **lust of the eyes, and pride of life**, also bring pleasure.

We like to get lots of nice things, and so we go on this mad quest to acquire the things, the nice things of this world, and it's completely out of control. Do you know what one of the largest industries in the United States is? Storage facilities. Yes! Storage facilities. Why? Because of this insane obsession with acquiring stuff... that we Americans have. We like to go out shopping, you know, *"Shop till you drop."* There's pleasure in that. Come on, now, admit it; and so you get all this stuff, and pretty soon your closets are bursting, and then your garage is bursting, and then you've got to go out and you've got to build a barn somewhere; and if you don't build a barn, you've got to rent somebody else's. Are you with me? You know I'm telling you the truth. **Didn't Jesus have a parable about this? Yes, He did {Lk 12:15-35}**; and why is this such an obsession? Because it gives pleasure. We like to get nice stuff. It gives pleasure; and the third, ego-motivation, you know, getting admired for your achievements, that brings pleasure. So, we go on this mad quest to indulge **lust of the flesh, lust of the**

eyes, and pride of life {1 Jn 2:16} because of the very real pleasure it affords us. That's how the devil gets so much mileage out of this stuff that he gets us to do.

Now, having discussed where temptation comes from, our next question is a vitally important one. Please focus and concentrate with me on this. We need to make sure we understand at what point, and precisely by what means, temptation becomes sin. Are you with me? Is that important to know? Yes, that's important to know! Why? Because it is only when you know precisely at what point and by what means temptation becomes sin that you can keep temptation from becoming sin. And is that important to know? Yes! Yes, it sure is. Okay. By what means and at what point does temptation become sin? Let's use our verse, our five-stage process that James has outlined for us. Okay? Let me ask it this way: When does temptation become sin? At stage one, two, three, four or five? Here we go, **verse 14: "But each one is tempted when he is,"** Stage one, **"drawn away by his own desires and enticed."** Stage two: **"Then when desire has conceived,"** Stage three: **"it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown, brings forth death."** {Jas 1:14-15} Okay? How many say stage one? How many say stage two? How many say stage three? ... Interesting, we've got quite a divided house here. How many say stage four? Okay? Good. Stage five is a little late too. Okay? So we've got some votes for stage one, two and three. You saw hands, one two and three. It points out a very real fact and that is that we don't really know precisely at what point, and by what means, temptation becomes sin; most of us, a lot of us anyway. So, which is it? ...and the rest of you who didn't vote, you're conscientious cowards.

My friends, come let us reason together. Okay? Let me just say, off the bat here, I believe that temptation becomes sin at stage two, at stage two. How? Why? Well, I think that if we recognize the spiritual equivalence of each of these stages, we will understand why I have selected stage two. Now, for those of you who said stage one, for those of you who voted for stage one, I can make a good case for you as well. Okay? It has to be carefully nuanced, but I can make a good case for you as well. Those of you who said stage three, I'm sorry, you really missed it. I can't make any case for that. Let's work with this. Okay?

Stage one: what is it? That's the seduction stage. Well, who is seducing whom? Work with me. What is the goal of the seducer? It's to give birth to sin. Right? Now, who is seducing? It's the old man. Right? **"Each one is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own,"** what? **"his own lusts."** {Jas 1:14} Those are the lusts of the flesh. That lower corrupt nature called **"the old man,"** {Col 3:9} called **"the flesh."** {1 Cor 15:50} Are you with me? Now you might say, *"Well, I thought he died."* Yes, by faith. **...and faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.** {Heb 11:1} Okay? **We have to reckon him dead {Rom 6:11}** on a moment-by-moment basis because in empirical reality he's still alive and well in the household of me. Are you with me? And he is always trying to seduce someone so that he can give birth to what? ...sin-- or have sin birthed, let's put it that way, so that he can get sin birthed, he wants to have sin birthed. So he's trying to seduce who?

Well, let me put it this way, we'll talk basic biology here. If you're going to give birth, and you're a man, what have you got to have? You've got to have some help. Right? You've got to have a woman, correct? I mean, we're talking real basic biology here. You've got to have a woman. Now if the old man is going to succeed in birthing sin, he's got to have the help of a woman. Who is the woman that he has to have the help of? It is the will. It is what, my friends? It is the will. The will is the woman in the nature of man. Work with me on this. I want you to understand this. What is the will? The will is the woman in the nature of man. You see, she is in charge of the household of me; she runs the home. But she herself is under the authority of a husband. Okay? Now who is the tyrannical, dictatorial husband of the will by nature? Who is it? It's the old man. Are you following this? ...and she is a helpless, submissive wife, to the old man. Part of the curse. Remarkably illustrated in the curse pronounced upon the woman. **"Your desire shall be for him and he shall,"** what? **"rule over you."**

{Gen 3:16} Now, just to help us with this discussion, let's name this woman. Let's call her Wilma. Okay? Doesn't that sound like an appropriate name? Wilma. Okay? This is my will. This is Wilma that we're talking about.

Now, by nature, who is she married to? The old man. He is a tyrannical control freak, and he has got to get his way, and he requires Wilma to submit and whenever he wants to give birth to sin, he requires her to cooperate, and he gets his way, doesn't he?

Now, my dear friends, there's a very, very important truth we have to understand here. The only way that Wilma is going to possibly be set free from this tyrannical marriage union, is by what? ...the death of the old man. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} You see, we are married till when? Come on, till when? ...till death do us part; and Wilma is a helpless, submissive wife to this wretched old man called the flesh, until when? ...until he what? ...he dies. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Is there a way that he can die? Yes! That's what the cross is for. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} As we come to the cross, and accept by faith Christ's death to sin as our own, what do we have the privilege of doing? Reckoning our old man to be what? ...dead, **dead indeed unto sin. {Rom 6:11}** We are. Now I'm talking here about **Romans 7:1-6**, and I would love to take the time to explore that with you, but we don't have it. But when Wilma comes to the cross, when we come to the cross, and Wilma chooses to accept Christ's death; she has the privilege of reckoning her old man what? ...dead; and by a faith acceptance of Christ's death to sin as our own, what can we say to the old man? "*I die to the old man.*" But my dear friends, what must we do immediately as well? **We die to the old man**, according to Paul, **that we might be married to another. {Rom 7:3}** Who's that? ...that's to our spiritual husband, Jesus Christ. Amen? So at the cross, we not only say: "*I die*" to the old man, we say what? "*...I do*" to Jesus. I do submit my will, Lord Jesus, to You. Take possession of her. She is Your blood-bought bride, she belongs to You; without reservation I yield my will to You. And my dear friends, it is only when we do that, hear me... ...it is only when we do that, we will have from Christ, our spiritual husband, power through the motivation of love and the Holy Spirit, sufficient to repulse the seductive advances of the old man, and choose rather to yield our will to the desires of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, communicated to us through our conscience.

Now, back to our stages though. If the will has been submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, she can, Wilma can, repulse the seductive advance of the old man. But if the will has not been submitted to Jesus Christ, if she has not been married to another, and entered into the holiest of wedlocks, the spiritual marriage union with Christ... Who, by the way, calls Himself our what? **...our Husband. {Isa 54:5}** - very, very significant. If she has entered into that spiritual union, in His strength, she can repulse that seductive advance, but if she hasn't, what's the only thing she can do? - submit, consent, consent. All she can do is consent. And my dear friends, at the moment Wilma says, "*Yes*" to the lusts of the flesh in the privacy of the bedroom of the mind, temptation has become sin. Did you follow that? **"Each one is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own lusts."** **{Jas 1:14}** You see, that's the seduction of the old man. Temptation has to involve our thoughts, doesn't it? You're not tempted unless your thoughts are engaged. The old man is seducing us and we have these wrong thoughts.

Now, what determines whether temptation becomes sin or not, is what we do with those wrong thoughts. Are you following this? If we consent to those wrong thoughts and allow them to linger in our minds, in God's eyes what have we done? We have sinned. We have sinned, and there is in the womb of the mind, the embryo of sin. Are you following this? We're using James' physical object lesson here to help us better understand what happens in the spiritual realm. When Wilma says, "*yes*" to the desires of the flesh, there's been a conception, and there is in the womb of the mind, the embryo of sin. Now what's going to happen sooner or later? Come on now... You're going to give birth. That's the next stage. What is that? That's when you do the deed. That's when you commit the act. That's when it moves out of the womb of the mind into the realm of behavior. Do you see that? Giving birth

is committing the sin. But my dear friends, before you give birth, you've got to what? ...conceive; and please know that in God's eyes, temptation has become sin at the point of conception, not the point of birth. I hope that's clear. ...I hope that's clear.

Now... Listen to this remarkable statement: **Signs of the Times, December 18, 1893: "It is not in the power of Satan to force anyone to sin. Sin is the sinner's individual act. Before sin exists in the heart, the consent of the will must be..."** what? **"given, and as soon as it is given, sin is triumphant, and hell rejoices."** - as soon as what is given? **...the consent of the will.** So when does temptation become sin? When Wilma says: "yes" to the seductive advances of the old man. **Lust hath conceived and we have sinned. {James 1:15}** Oh, my dear friends, one more: **Testimonies, Volume 4, page 623: "The thoughts of the heart are discerned of God. When impure thoughts are cherished, they need not be expressed by word or act to consummate the sin and bring the soul into condemnation. Its purity is defiled, and the tempter has triumphed."** Are we all clear on when it is, and by what means temptation becomes sin? I hope so.

In part two, we will consider carefully how it is that we can keep that from happening. Let's stand for prayer.

Father in heaven, thank You so much for James' precious insight into the anatomy and physiology of temptation, and how it becomes sin. Please help us to learn important spiritual lessons, and help us to learn the secret of keeping temptation from becoming sin. Make this very clear to us; help us to not only understand it in our minds, but most importantly help us to experience it in our lives. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.