

Finding Refuge and Fighting Sexual Sin

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I. Introduction

A. Inadequacy of much help that is offered:

1. Fear of consequences
2. Action plans
3. Getting insight

B. Alternative framework:

1. Temptation is suffering
2. God is faithful to give refuge

II. We suffer in temptation

A. Emotional range:

1. *Before* you fall into sin, you can feel dullness, sadness, fear, loneliness, or grief.
2. *During* a temptation you might feel, excitement or nervousness, frustration or calm, pleasure or pain.
3. *Afterwards* you may feel relief or despair, anger or terror.

B. Temptation: affliction and allure

1. James 1
2. Romans 7

David Powlison: "Your sins delight you less and less; they afflict you more and more."

John Calvin: "There remains in a regenerate [person] a smoldering cinder of evil, from which desires continually leap forth to allure and spur him to commit sin."

Christopher Lasch: "Today men and women seek escape from emotion . . . because they experience their own inner impulses as intolerably urgent and menacing."

John Keble, "To One in Temptation":

"I think it probable that some of your worst falls arise in some measure from your getting into an excited and irregular state of body and mind by sitting up late, whether for study or amusement, and that if you could set yourself a moderately strict rule in that matter, and keep to it, beside the little self-denial, it would be help to you, in more ways than one.

At the same time, you know very well that there is one who will make it his particular business to put this sort of temptation in your way. . . . Therefore you must not be too much cast down,

not think all is going wrong, should you find yourself for a long time haunted in the way I mean: only do not lend yourself to it in the least degree, do not wait to fight, but [flee].”

- C. Mood management
 1. Antidepressant
 2. Blow off steam
 3. Reset button
 4. Illusion of productivity
 5. Distraction
 6. Relief from loneliness and other pains

- D. The addictive cycle
 1. Situation
 2. Lead-up
 3. Action
 4. Aftermath

- E. False alternatives: deliverance or downfall

III. God is faithful

- A. 1 Cor 10:13
- B. Enduring distress with the Lord
 1. Imagery that hits home
 2. Surviving the wilderness with manna
 3. A new kind of prayer
 4. Key take-aways:
 - a) God’s help is more often as manna in the wilderness than an immediate escape from the wilderness
 - b) God is Refuge in the storm rather than as the one who will always immediately make the waves and winds calm down
 - c) God’s presence sustains you one step at time through the valley of the shadow of death.
- C. Enduring distress with people
 1. For counselors and pastors:
 - a) Building an emotional vocabulary like that of the Psalms

In the times before or during temptation, I feel... aggressive, agitated, angry, bored, calm, confident, curious, determined, disappointed, disbelieving, disgusted, ecstatic, enraged, envious, exasperated, exhausted, frightened, frustrated, grieving, guilty, happy, horrified, hopeless, hopeful, indifferent, interested, lonely, mischievous, miserable, obstinate, optimistic, pained, paranoid, puzzled, regretful, relieved, sad, satisfied, sheepish, smug, tentative, torn, withdrawn.

- b) Learn the logic of sexual sin
- c) Fight on other fronts
 - (1) Gluttony
 - (2) Greed
 - (3) Envy
 - (4) Vainglory
 - (5) Anger
 - (6) Sloth

John Cassian: ‘The more one grows in sweet patience, the more one grows in purity of body. The further we remove the passion of anger from ourselves, the firmer will be our grasp on chastity. For the heat of the body will not cool unless the outbursts of the heart are restrained.’

- d) Cultivate fruits of the Spirit
 - (1) Emotional experiences/heart dispositions
 - (a) Love
 - (b) Joy
 - (c) Peace
 - (d) Kindness
 - (e) Goodness
 - (2) Efforts and restraints
 - (a) Forbearance
 - (b) Faithfulness
 - (c) Gentleness
 - (d) Self-control

- 2. For friends
 - a) Honesty
 - b) Courage
 - c) Endurance

- 3. Spouse

IV. Testing is the path to glory

- A. Romans 5
- B. Hebrews 12