Only Three Temptations

If we were asked, "How many different ways does Satan tempt us?" the answer might be hundreds or even a thousand ways. After all, we are all individuals with different strengths and weaknesses and what might not tempt one person will be a huge challenge for another. So, how can God possibly warn us about temptation when there are countless ways the devil entices us to go down the sinful road? Well, in His infinite and amazing wisdom, God has admonished us through the scriptures by using only three temptations. More correctly stated, He uses three broad categories that every conceivable temptation will fall into. The passage is found in 1 John 2:15-16:

> "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."

These three categories of temptation are the very methods Satan used against Jesus as he tempted the Lord for forty days in the wilderness, Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12.

1. The "lust of the flesh" is any and every physical desire, passion, or pleasure that is contrary to God's moral laws. Even things within themselves that are not sinful, become so when our desire for them is not controlled and kept in proper perspective and priority. Our "love" or loyalty is not to be for the physical things of earth but for the spiritual things of heaven, Matt. 6:19-21; 16:26.

2. The "lust of the eyes" centers around what Jesus called "the lamp of the body". It is with our eyes that our minds consume either light or darkness, Luke 11:34-36. The Lord also taught us that with the eyes we can commit sin just as if we'd done the physical act itself, Matt. 5:27:30.

3. Finally, the "pride of life" pertains to the basic impulse we have for boastful status and self-centered desire. Pride and arrogance are characteristics despised by God and are to be absent from the Christian's life, Prov. 6:17; 21:4; James 4:6.

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