

# How Do You Stop the Devil?

I remember a children's song from my youth: *Roll the Gospel Chariot Along*. It was a fun song for kids because it had hand motions. In one verse of the song we sang: "If a sinner's in the way, we will stop and pick him up." Our favorite verse, however, said: "If the devil's in the way, we will roll right over him."

We were going to just 'roll right over' the devil. Strong! Brave!...and out of touch with reality.

Don't get me wrong; it's a fine song; and I do believe that, figuratively speaking, the gospel 'rolls right over the devil.'

The problem is that so many Christians who have responded to that 'devil rolling' gospel lose their strength and lose their courage in the face of temptation.

The devil is so cunning. He uses different strategies of deception, the most insidious, I believe, our own personal desires. That's what James explains:

**But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.**

—James 1:14

Do you know why temptation is so difficult to resist? We actually LIKE the object of our temptation. In other words, the thing that tempts us IS tempting because it is rooted in our inner desires. ('Lust' is really nothing more than 'a longing desire' cast in a negative context.)

Whenever we long for something, our mind works overtime to construct thinking that will give us permission to satisfy our desire. Here are a few examples (some, rather silly):

- ◆ Chocolate comes from the cocoa bean. A bean is a vegetable. *Health food*.
- ◆ I cannot afford it, but it is a great deal; too good to pass up. *Savvy shopper*.

- ◆ "Surely God would not deprive a person of true love," the adulterer told himself.
- ◆ "I was born this way," said the young person desiring a homosexual relationship.
- ◆ "No one will find out," said the thief.
- ◆ "He deserved it!" said the murderer.

The mind has to create a line of reasoning that will satisfy the conscience. The conscience has the task of informing the mind of right and wrong. It approves right and disapproves wrong. When a person does wrong, the conscience shouts, "Guilty!"...unless the mind is able to cleverly present a *reasonable* explanation that will justify the wrong. In reality, any explanation that justifies doing wrong is masquerading as 'rational' thinking. There's a word for that kind of lie: Rationalization.

The conscience is really serious about not feeling guilt. So, rationalization justifies wrong. Or, put another way, rationalization mutes the conscience and says "Yes" to wrong.

**Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.** —James 1:15

The word 'conceived' literally means to 'take hold of' or 'take control of.'

Question: Is that what you want? Do you want your inner desires (lusts) to take control of your life and drag you into sin?

Have you ever considered saying, "NO!" to your desires? That is how you stop the devil.

Would you like to make the devil run? Or do you just want to play games with your desires?

Stopping the devil's deceptions begins with a true rational mind deciding that 'desire' will not be in control. That requires self-restraint.