

Sunday, May 4, 2025 pm

## STUDIES IN JAMES (5) Dealing With Temptations James 1:12-16

Tonight, we continue our study through James. As we have noted, James is a letter filled with practical direction for believers. After introductory remarks, he addresses how trials can make us better. We have also noted how we can turn to God for strength (asking for wisdom in faith). In our last lesson, we noted the contrast between the rich and the poor and the need for humility in both cases. It is tied to the context as an example of how we can be tempted and face trials.

In our lesson tonight, we want to address what James says about being tempted. This is a powerful passage that helps us understand what temptation is and how it happens. The fact is, we are all tempted – it is what Satan does. But if we are aware of how he works, we can protect ourselves from its devastating results.

### I. **Blessed is the man who endures temptation**

- a. Bringing us back to the beginning of James' letter – 1:2-4, he now focuses on a specific type of trials – temptations (note: It is the same word as trials in vs. 2).
- b. **Blessed is the man who endures temptations** - recall how in vs. 2-3 James noted how the testing of faith can produce patience. Here, we are patient (we endure), and we will be blessed.
  - i. The word “blessed” is the same word found in the “beatitudes” in Matthew 5:3-12, and a total of 50x in the NT. It is a word associated with being joyfully satisfied (cf. Romans 14:22 – *“Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he does.”*). It is not simply happiness, but one who understands he is blessed (showered with God's favor) by God.
  - ii. And the word “endure” is the verb form of the same word in vs 3 for patience (noun). The idea is clearly this is one who faces temptation and overcomes (avoids giving in).
- c. **For when he is approved** – in vs. 2-4 we noted how good can come from trials. Here, the assumption is that good HAS come from them. Specifically, he notes that he has been accepted by God, meaning he has successfully overcome temptations and thus he is approved (accepted as genuine).
- d. **He will receive the crown of life** – the one who does not let temptations defeat him, will be rewarded with eternal life. The word for crown here is the victor's crown. 2 Timothy 4:8.
- e. **It is promised by the Lord to those who love Him** – clearly this is a reference to our salvation. Romans 2:7 speaks of the eternal life that awaits those *“who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality.”*

### II. **God is NOT the source of temptation**

- a. Often, when we face temptations, we want to blame God. After all, He is in control of all things. But even though He ALLOWS us to be tempted, He is not the one who tempts us.
- b. **God cannot be tempted by evil** – Matthew 4:7 (Deut. 6:16). This is yet another example of how God is over Satan. Psalm 5:4-5, *For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.*
- c. **Nor does He Himself tempt anyone** (to do evil).
  - i. Some might ask, What about passages that describe God as testing others? Abraham (KJV – did tempt) – Genesis 22:1; Exodus 15:25 at the waters of Meribah, “He tested them”, or Deuteronomy 8:3 where we read that for 40 years He “tested” them.

- ii. There is a difference between testing (making life less than easy) and tempting to actually sin.
  - iii. God NEVER puts a stumbling block in one's way that will force him to sin and lose favor with Him.
  - iv. Consider 1 Corinthians 10:13 – no temptation...
  - v. Yet man's first tendency is to blame God for his failures.
  - vi. Our text is clear that sin as a result of temptation is OUR fault. Yes, Satan has a part in tempting us, but ultimately, it is our fault.
- d. Vs. 16-18 – is an elaboration on God where temptations are concerned.
- i. **Every good and perfect gift is from above** – THIS is what he offers us (2 Peter 1:3, Ephesians 1:3, etc.). Titus 2:11 speaks of His grace having appeared to all men.
  - ii. **And comes down from the Father of lights – with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.** What God gives us is light. God is light and in Him is no darkness – 1 John 1:5. And He does not change! He is consistent and dependable.
  - iii. **Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth** – this is a reference to salvation. James is writing to those who were saved. They had obeyed the gospel and were now part of His family. WHY would He sabotage those whom He saved. John 17:17 – we are sanctified by His word of truth. Colossians 1:5, *because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,*
  - iv. **That we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures** – the idea of being the first fruits is the best. James is noting that God cares about us and desires our salvation. Hebrews 12:22-23 describes the godly, *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

### III. How temptation happens

- a. **Each one is tempted** – in contrast to God (**But**), James addresses WHO is responsible for temptations. Understand we will ALL be tempted! Romans 3:23, "All have sinned..."
- b. **When he is drawn away by his own desires – we cannot blame anyone but ourselves when we give into temptations.**
  - i. Certainly, Satan has a part - he is the tempter, accuser, liar, deceiver, etc. But even in that, when we give in, we are complicit.
  - ii. That is the ONLY viable alternative when we consider free will. And to deny free will is to rightly blame God for our sins, which James just said NOT to do!
- c. **And enticed** – this word means to be baited. The word is found 3x in NT – here and 2 Peter 2:14 & 18, "enticing unstable souls" & "when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh..." As strongly as he can, Satan is going to dangle "bait" that you want in front of you. BUT you can walk away. Recall what Jesus did in Matthew 4 – He dismissed it and refused to give in, all 3 temptations.
- d. **Then when desire has conceived** – means to be impregnated (Luke 1:24, 31). It can also imply the idea of being seized (cf. Acts 26:21). When it comes to sin, this is where the problem begins. We dwell on what we are being tempted with. We think about it and can't get it out of our minds. NOTE: We realize that at times we cannot totally control our thoughts (though there are things you can do about it). BUT you can control how you respond to lustful thoughts (cf. 1 John 2:15-17). Will you dwell on it or take steps to dismiss it from your mind?

- e. ***Then, it gives birth to sin*** – this is where the actual sin comes in. You give into your desires and act on it. In so doing, it is no longer a temptation. You have sinned!
- f. ***And sin, when it is full-grown brings forth death*** – death is the ultimate result of sin (Romans 6:23). Does this mean that some sins are acceptable as long as we do not let them mature? No! If you have given birth to sin, you are guilty. You NEED to take care of it. The point of this expression is describing one who does not truly repent of his sins and is therefore separated from God.
- g. ***Consider the fishing analogy:***
  - i. ***Desires*** - Fish are hungry and curious. That will become the foundation of bait. First, to be tempted requires it to be something that we want. Something pleasant to us. Sadly, Satan knows what that is. There are areas of our lives that we are simply not tempted with. For temptation to be successful there has to be desire.
  - ii. ***Enticed*** – something gets the attention of the fish that appeals to their desires. Satan dangles the lure in front of us. Lures are designed to be appealing to the type of fish (or game) you are trying to catch. It might be “live bait” or something that attracts – shiny, glistening, scented, making noise to get your attention, etc.
  - iii. ***Conceives*** – the fish moves toward the bait to investigate, with the intention of eating it. Satan has your attention and you are now taking action toward the temptation.
  - iv. ***He takes the bait*** – the fish eats the bait. Understand that typically, the fisherman’s lure is not what is a danger. It is the hook! Now he is caught by the bait. Satan may dangle temptation in front of us. But it will do nothing until we reach out and “take the bait”. Then we are “hooked”.
  - v. ***It brings forth death*** – UNLESS the fish, realizing what he has taken is dangerous and breaks free, he ends up on the dinner table. Dead! When Satan has caught us in our sins, we have the consequences. Unless we “break free”, it will kill us spiritually.
  - vi. ***THAT is what James is describing***. He warns His audience because he does NOT want them to be entrapped by the lures of Satan.

#### IV. **How can we avoid temptations?**

- a. Change your desires – Romans 12:1-2 speaks of our need to be transformed. Galatians 5:24, *And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*. IF we are to be successful in overcoming sin, we need to change the way we think! You have to renew your mind. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 speaks of even bringing our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.
- b. Limit your opportunities – temptation will not happen if there is no opportunity. E.g., What is the likelihood of you being tempted to engage in some sinful activity while you are assembled with your brethren? (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25) Consider Psalm 101, a psalm of David where he vows faithfulness to God and steps he will take to ensure that.
- c. Ask for help - specifically, when you are tempted, it is time to pray. Matthew 6:13. Recall James 1:5 – If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God... 2 Thessalonians 3:3 tells us, *But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one*.
- d. Exercise self-control – every sin we commit involves self-control/discipline (or the lack thereof). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and a building block toward maturity (2 Peter 1:5-7). Remember 1 Corinthians 10:13 – God WILL make the way of escape.
- e. Obtain forgiveness – if you have given into sin, you can be forgiven. 1 John 1:7-9, 2:1-2. Acts 8:22 – repent and pray for forgiveness. AND, if you have never obeyed the gospel – do it. Acts 2:38, 22:16, etc.

Temptation is a very real trial that we ALL struggle with from time to time. Understand that being tempted is NOT a sin. Hebrews 4:15-16 notes that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. It is when we give in to our temptations that we sin. But even then, as we have noted, it is not the end. You can be reconciled to God. How are you dealing with your temptations? Think about it!