

## FAITH IN TEMPTATION

(James 1:13-18)

- A. James explained that much of our suffering is not just due to outward circumstances that try our faith, but also because of our desire to sin.
1. In other words sin brings the very opposite effect or result into our lives than we expect.
  2. We sin because we seek a forbidden pleasure, but we find that it was only temporary while the consequences of it are rather long-lasting – so *sin is deceptive in its nature*.
  3. Satan (1 Jn 3:8) was the first to experiment with the deceptive nature of sin, & He now knows the futility of transgressing God's law (1 Jn 3:4).
    - a. The pleasure Satan got from his first sin, & later his deceiving the human race will result in his everlasting pain (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10).

[Isn't that ironic? The action he hoped would bring him lasting satisfaction was the deed that will destroy him eternally. Of course the same can be true for us.]

### I. REALITY OF TEMPTATION

- A. Looking back over your life as a Christian you may remember that some of your strongest temptations were at the beginning of your walk the Lord.
1. Baptism didn't drown the Devil (Martin Luther).
  2. You may look back on those days & wonder why God wasn't more protective of you.

[But the fact is, He was protective; remember what Paul wrote (1 Cor 10:13), & what Jesus prayed (Matt 6:13).]

- a. God WAS testing your loyalty – if you're old enough to follow Christ then you're old enough to prove it.

- b. Satan didn't want to lose your loyalty – so He worked harder in the beginning of your faith, while you were weak & immature.
- c. But your Father never had you out of view; He knew you might fail, but He also knew your faith would never grow until you had to exercise your faith.

- c. Then while you're working so long & hard to pay for those "things" you can lose interest in your spouse, your soul & the church.
- d. Finally, when you've lived long enough to see more disappointments than happiness you may lose your trust in God & thus your interest in going to Heaven.

B. **Temptation plays no favorites**; in whatever stage of life you find yourself, you will face temptations.

2. At every stage of life, we need to remember that not even the Son of Man escaped the battering effects of temptation.

1. And those temptations will come in different forms over the various stages of life.

- a. Temptations may begin with sexual temptations, lying to your parents, cheating on tests, drinking, breaking the law, etc.
- b. Then it moves on to the love of money & the desire to have pleasurable "things", & using whatever means necessary to attain them.

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**Heb 4:14-16** – Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 ***For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*** 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy & find grace to help in time of need.

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- a. It is not a sin to be tempted, but every sin begins with a temptation (a lust to do evil), just as every trial is accompanied by a temptation.

[I love the song “Farther Along”, but I have one problem with it.

We don’t have to “wonder why [we are tempted & tried] & why it should be thus all the day long, while there are others living about us never molested though in the wrong?”

The answer to that question is found in several places in the Scripture, including the book of James.

God is interested in our faith & trust in Him becoming “perfect & complete, lacking nothing.”

So, since temptation is an instrument of deception, what lies can we expect to “hear” when we are tempted to sin?]

## II. LIES OF TEMPTATION

A. “Why did God do this to me; He should have prevented it.”

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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.

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1. Do you remember being in school & taking an exam for which you were not well prepared?

a. Was your first thought, “He [the teacher or professor] tricked me”? His lectures were about this, but he’s testing us on that.”

b. It’s the old blame game, & we sometimes try to play it in the spiritual realm with God.

2. But James tells us that GOD is NOT the reason we are tempted, WE are the reason.

a. God not trying to trick us; in fact, He’s done everything He intends to do to prevent us from being tricked into sin.

b. So the reason we are tricked into sinning is because WE still hold on to the desire to sin.

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1:14 – But *each one is tempted when he is drawn away* [from God] *by his own desires & enticed.*

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- c. WE are tempted because we are still “enticed” by sin. The Greek word means to bait, catch by a bait; to beguile, allure, entice, deceive.

3. So how do we defend ourselves against the enticement to sin?

- a. We stop nibbling on the bait; we get as far away from it as we can (1 Cor 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11).
- b. And then we go to work on ourselves learning to “desire” those things that please God.

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**Gal 5:16-17** – I say then: ***Walk in the Spirit, & you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*** 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, & the Spirit against the flesh; & these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

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[Replacing the love of sin with the fruit of the Spirit will all but eliminate Satan’s opportunity to tempt us. “*Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...*” (5:22-23)

A second lie of temptation...]

B. “This sin will be worth it in the long run.”

1. That’s the lie Satan told Eve in the garden.

- a. But they both learned, & Adam too, that disobeying God is never worth it.

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**1:15-16** – Then, ***when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; & sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*** 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

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- b. There are no short or long-term benefits to sin – if there were we could sin, mock God & say “See, what you said about sin is not true.”
- c. But God said He cannot be mocked, & that we will reap as we have sown whether to flesh resulting in corruption or to the Spirit resulting in everlasting life (Gal 6:7-8).

d. Just ask David or Samson whether there are any rewards to sin; they learned the hard lesson, “your sins will find you out” (Num 32:23).

2. Still, people sin because they think it’s going to be worth it; they want to “live it up” for a while – “sow their wild oats”.

a. But what they fail to understand is that God’s gifts & His rewards are far & away better than the temporary pleasures of sin – *because only God’s gifts are true & lasting.*

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1:17 – *Every good gift & every perfect gift is from above, & comes down from the Father of lights*, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

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A third lie of temptation...]

C. “I just couldn’t help myself.”

1. People who say this are using their human weakness as a scapegoat.

a. They feel absolved of their guilt by attributing their sin to the fact that nobody’s perfect.

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1:18 – Of His own will *He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*

1:18 (NIV) – He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

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1. By means of His word God brought about our new beginning as His new creation.

2. So if we say, “I just couldn’t help it, I had to sin”, then we are calling God a liar & saying “I see no use or purpose for your Word”.

a. Other common responses to sin are: “But he or she provoked me into it.” “God made me this way.” “I have to keep this job.”

b. The word of God holds the proper response to all these dilemmas.

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**2 Pet 1:3-4** – *His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life & godliness, through the knowledge of Him* who called us by glory & virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great & precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

**Titus 2:11-12** – For *the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us* that, denying ungodliness & worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, & godly in the present age, (**Rom 6:3-7**)

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century (1300's) there were three brothers all Dukes in Belgium.

The elder brother Raynald was so overweight they gave him the nickname Crassus (Crass-us), which was Latin for "fat."

One day Raynald & his brother Edward had a big dispute, & Edward ultimately took over his brother's kingdom & put him in prison in the Newkirk Castle.

He built a special cell just for him: It had windows & a door with no lock. But the doorway was just big enough that if Raynald had lost some weight he could get through the door & go home.

But every day Edward had the finest meals prepared for Raynald in abundant supply, & instead of cutting back on the amount of food he ate, he ate more & more & grew fatter & fatter.

Whenever anyone would accuse Edward of being cruel for imprisoning his brother, he would say, "My brother is not a prisoner. He can leave whenever he wills."

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3. One of temptation's or Satan's greatest lies is to convince people they just can't help themselves; they must sin.

4. One man put it this way, "I have two influences living within me: the flesh & the Spirit. When temptation knocks what happens next depends on who I send to answer the door."

[We all struggle with temptation. We have all been drawn away by our lusts, & we expect the Devil to cast his lures in our direction again.

So it would do us well not only to pray for wisdom when facing a trial, but also before we face the next temptation (**Jas 1:5; Matt 6:13**).]

## CLOSING

- A. If we're going to be able to overcome the power of temptation then we must be able to recognize the lies of temptation.

### GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

**Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible:** Acts 2; 3; 13; Rom 10:17

**Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior:** Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

**Repent of your sins:** Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

**Confess your faith in Jesus Christ:** Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

**Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins:** Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

**Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge:** Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48