

## Message #5

## James 1:13-18

Every one of us has a problem and the problem is sin. We have a nature that loves to sin. That nature craves fleshly things and it is so powerful that at times a believer can do just the opposite of what he wants to do and knows he should do.

The big problem with sin is that those who sin are slow to admit it; in fact, some never do. But the problem for those who admit the sin is the tendency to blame someone else for it.

- 1) Some blame the environment - if the drugs didn't exist, I wouldn't take them.
- 2) Some blame their parents - if my parents hadn't set such a high bar, I wouldn't have failed. If they would have raised me differently, I wouldn't have made wrong choices. I actually know of a child who said if their parents had not made them go to church, they would not have done what they did.
- 3) Some blame their minister - I actually had a mother blame me for the fact that her daughter fell into immorality because I preached against immorality. She said if I hadn't preached against it, her daughter would not have done it.
- 4) Some blame Satan - They will tell you it really wasn't them that did it, it was Satan. A minister I know of got caught stealing and he told the police he didn't do it but a demon living inside him did it. When I was teaching in Grand Rapids, a student was caught calling an x-rated phone number. His excuse was Satan caused him to do it. Satan caused him to look up the number, dial it and then talk for an hour.

**People will go to great lengths to blame everyone except themselves. They will try to pass the buck and not take responsibility. The worst of all is to blame God.**

There are people who will actually blame God for their sin choices. They will blame God for permitting whatever it is to exist. They will blame God for not stopping them. They will blame God for not preventing them.

James had seen that kind of thing even in the early days of Christianity. Some of these Jewish believers were thinking like that and James wanted it stopped. What he said here is this:

**THOSE WHO ARE RIGHT WITH GOD IN GRACE TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN SIN AND BLAME THEMSELVES, NOT GOD.**

Now one reason why James needed to address this subject is because of what Pharisaical religious Jewish Rabbis were teaching. They taught that man had two tendencies:

- 1) Toward good (yester hatob); 2) Toward evil (yester hara).

The Rabbis argued that since God made all things, He is actually the One who created evil tendencies and therefore He was to be blamed for our sin.

One Rabbi wrote this: “God said, it repents me that I created the evil tendency in man; for had I not done so, he would not have rebelled against me. I created the evil tendency; I created the law as a means of healing. If you occupy yourself with the law, you will not fall into the power of it” (cited from William Barclay, *James*).

So the Pharisees blamed God for the sin problem and then tried to get people to go under the O.T. law for the cure. They blamed even God and refused to take responsibility for their own sin.

James said God is not the problem; we are the problem.

In **verse 13**, you will notice that three times the word “tempt” appears and again once in **verse 14**.

The Greek word (πειραζω) is one that is used two ways in Scripture:

- 1) It is used in a good sense of testing someone to prove their faith. Deut. 13:3
- 2) It is used in a bad sense of soliciting someone to do that which is evil.

(G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 351)

It is the context that determines which it is and in this context it is solicitation to do evil that James has in mind. When we are pulled to do evil, never say God did it. Do not ever think or say this was God’s will that I choose to sin.

Although trials and troubles may be what one uses for an excuse to do evil, James point is don’t blame God for your choice to do evil; put the blame where it really goes, on self.

A pastor friend of mine had a man in his church who was going through some tough times in his business. He was going to a bar and getting drunk and blaming the trouble on his business. Instead of going to God and drawing close to Him, he is in a bar getting drunk. I know a case in which a minister got involved in immoral behavior and blamed the pressure of the job. James says knock it off and put the blame where it belongs, on self.

There are four theological facts that James wants to set forth here that we all need to know:

**THEOLOGICAL FACT #1** – God is never the source of evil temptation. **1:13**

James starts here, God is never the source of evil temptation. The preposition “by” is the preposition “apo.” I don’t think that is a coincidence because this preposition is one that means beside or from the edge of. What this means is that evil temptation is nowhere near God whatsoever (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 101).

**Not only is evil temptation not from God, it is not even near God. Evil has no connection to God whatsoever.** The believer must not even say that God had something to do with the evil we do. Now James gives two reasons why a believer must not say that:

**Reason #1** - Because God cannot be tempted by evil. **1:13a**

The word “cannot be tempted” is rare. It is a word that implies without any experience in something (Smith, p. 46). God has absolutely no experience whatsoever in being tempted to do evil. He never has and never will. God is totally and completely and majestically holy. Since evil is not something that is connected to God in any way, He cannot possibly be the source of it.

**Reason #2** - Because God does not tempt anyone to do evil. **1:13b**

It is absolutely impossible for God to ever tempt anyone to do evil. God will never tempt anyone to do evil. God will not ever give someone a desire to get drunk. God will not ever give someone a desire to gossip. God will not ever give someone a desire to lose their temper. God will not ever cause you to be proud. God will not ever give someone a desire to be immoral. This is not God’s problem, this is our problem.

From a theological perspective:

- 1) God does sovereignly control our present circumstances.
- 2) God does at times permit Satan to try and disrupt our faith.
- 3) God will not ever tempt anyone to do that which is evil.

People who have experienced God’s grace realize that and admit it.

**THEOLOGICAL FACT #2** – We are the source of our own evil temptation. **1:14-16**

Notice how **verse 14** begins “but.” **In sharp contrast to what no one should say, here is what all need to admit. Instead of blaming God, we need to put the blame where it really belongs, on ourselves.**

There are two participles I want us to see in **verse 14**. Both are present passive participles, meaning this is the continual, habitual truth all the time. The participle “carried away” is one that means to draw out or away from the place of safety (*Ibid.*, p. 159). The participle “enticed” means to allure by use of a bait (*Ibid.*, p. 101).

These were fishing terms that certainly meant something to people living in Palestine because fishing is big business. The fisherman would try to lure the fish away from the safety of their own areas and use a bait to lure them to their own death.

God says that is the way it works with God’s own people. In fact, **verse 14** says this is the way it works with “each one”; every single one of us. They lure themselves away from their place of safety and by their own lusts lure themselves right into sin and death.

There are five admissions grace believers will acknowledge:

**Admission #1** - When we are tempted it is because of our own lusts. **1:14**

This is where temptation starts, with our own flesh and lusts. A godless world appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The world offers the bait and our flesh wants us to take it. The “each one” makes it individual. Temptations are tailored to ourselves.

**Admission #2** - When we feed our lusts, they begin to grow. **1:15a**

That word “conceive” is one that refers to a pregnancy. The idea is that when that lust starts growing, it will continue to grow. Unless there is some type of lust abortion, it will eventually give birth to something very serious and sinful.

**Admission #3** - When our lusts grow it produces sin. **1:15b**

The verb “give birth” (τικτω) refers to continually bringing forth or begetting something. The present tense of the verb indicates that lusts that continually grow will always end up continually giving birth to sin. Venerable Bede, the English theologian and monk of the 700’s, said there are three stages in temptation: 1) Suggestion; 2) Experiment; 3) Consent.

**Admission #4** - When we sin it will grow to an accomplished level. **1:15c**

Once one sins, it typically doesn’t end there. It continues to grow until it reaches a full, complete level. Religious rules and O.T. laws won’t stop it.

**Admission #5** - When our sin reaches full level it will produce death. **1:15d**

The end result of one who does not stop the process is that it will produce death. It will kill your spiritual life. It will kill your spiritual ministry. It will kill relationships. It may even kill your own life.

Do you know where this all starts? You blame God for sin and don’t take responsibility. It is critical that lust lures be caught, faced and admitted in the early stages. Don’t blame someone else for our own lusts and failures. Take full responsibility. Go to God and admit it and confess it and deal with it or it will kill you. James says in **verse 16**, “Do not be deceived”; this is the way it really is.

**THEOLOGICAL FACT #3** – God is always the source of all things good. **1:17**

James says not only is God not the source of any evil, God is always the source of that which is good. James says with God there is no variation of good and bad, of light and darkness. There is never a variation in the character of God. He is Holy. He is good. He is light.

God is always the source of good things, not evil things. God cannot ever be the source of evil things. Now the fact that God does not variate in anything means:

- 1) We cannot blame God for our lusts and sin.
- 2) We can confess our sin and He will cleanse us always.
- 3) We cannot ever lose our salvation. God cannot change His mind.

**THEOLOGICAL FACT #4** – God is the source of our salvation. **1:18**

The most wonderful, good gift that God ever gave to people who have been drawn away by their own lusts into sinful things is salvation. Think of this. **Don't blame God for your sin; praise God for your salvation. Don't blame God for your failures; worship God for your forgiveness.**

There are three wonderful realities that James brings out about our salvation:

**Reality #1** - Our salvation came from the sovereign will of God. **1:18a**

That word “will” is a strong word that refers to a deliberate and determined choice. Isn't this amazing? In spite of our fleshly lusts that lures us to sin, God, but His will, saved us. We sure weren't saved by our lusts and lures. We were saved by the will of God.

It was not our will that saved us (John 1:13). It was not our seeking God that saved us (Rom. 3:11). It was not our choice that saved us (John 15:16). **It was God's will that saved us.**

Talk about a good gift. God gave us the gift of salvation. This is pure grace.

**Reality #2** - Our salvation came from the sovereign Word of God. **1:18b**

What God actually uses to save us is His inspired Word. We are not saved by evangelistic hype. We are not saved by walking an aisle or raising a hand. We are saved by the Word of God.

We have someone in this church who was saved in the book of Acts. He told me it started as we went through Acts 9 and he saw the conversion of Saul. He said by the time we got to Antioch in Acts 13, that was it—I believed on the Lord and was saved.

It was God's Word that saved him. Just like Paul said, “faith comes by hearing the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

**Reality #3** - Our salvation came from the sovereign plan of God. **1:18c**

God has a plan for our lives and He had a plan for these Jews. The plan was this—that they display the grace salvation He gave them.

He wanted them to be the first fruits display of His saving grace. He did not want them spending their lives blaming Him for their lust problems, but praising Him and displaying His grace salvation.