

#6 in series “Doing What We Believe”

(A Study in the Book of James)

In the sharing of our series through the book of James – we spent last week focusing on verses 13-16 of chapter one – under the title – Winning The Battle Within. Today, we will continue our examination of the balance of this paragraph in chapter one – and because of its context – we will continue with the same title...

So far, we have learned that there is a difference between a “*trial*” and a “*temptation*”... Basically, **trials** are challenges that we face both from without and within – and they do not necessary come from – or lead to sin... But **temptation** – is an “*enticement to evil*” and when we yield to them – they always lead to sin!

Trials can be tests sent by God – but temptations come from the world, the flesh and the devil... And again, trials are to be endured – while temptations are to be resisted... With that – let me read this text again –

James 1:13-18 (NASB)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

Last time we took a –

1. Look Within to Evaluate The Problem

We saw The Reality of Yearning Temptation (:14)

14 But each one is tempted... ESV – “But each person is tempted...”

All of us can testify to the truthfulness of that statement... Everyone is tempted – no one is immune... The we considered –

The Ruin When Yielding to Temptation

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

We saw where James describes this process of sin in four stages.

Craving Desires (:14)

Concealed Deception (:14, 16)

Carnal Defiance (:15)

Notice now how James took us from the **emotions** (craving desires) to the **intellect** (concealed deception) and then to the **will** (carnal defiance).

Then comes –

Consequential Death (:15)

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

Today we want to focus on verses 17 and 18. Let's –

2. Look Up to Appropriate The Solution

Consider the Richness Yielded by God's Goodness (:17)

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

A major trick that the enemy of our souls uses – is to get us to thinking that God somehow is holding out on us... That He does not really love us, or care for our needs...

When Satan approached Eve, he suggested that if God really loved her, He would allow her to eat of the forbidden fruit... When Satan tempted Jesus, he basically raised the question of hunger. “If Your Father loves You, why are You hungry?”

So, what is it that we need to know when we begin to experience “stinking thinking” like that?

The first thing we need to remind ourselves of – is –

The Goodness of God

In a few moments we will consider the “good” gifts God gives – but we must first realize that “good” gifts come from a “Good God”!

Psalm 25:8a (NASB) “... Good and upright is the Lord.”

Exo. 34:6 (KJV) “... The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth”

Ps. 145:1-9 (NASB)

¹ I will extol You, my God, O King,
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.

² Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.

³ Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised,
And His greatness is unsearchable.

⁴ One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.

⁵ On the glorious splendor of Your majesty
And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.

⁶ Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts,
And I will tell of Your greatness.

⁷ They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness

And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.

⁸ The Lord is gracious and merciful;
Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

⁹ The Lord is good to all,
And His mercies are over all His works.

Ps. 33:5b (NKJV) "...The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

We would be here all day, if we were to examine all the Scriptures that simply speak to the goodness of God!... Recognizing and acknowledging God's goodness is a great defense mechanism – a great barrier against yielding to temptation...

Since God is good, we know that He has the best plan to meet our needs!...
We do not need to seek substitute plans in order to meet those needs...

Question: Is it not better to be hungry in the will of God than to fill our appetites with the "pods that the pigs ate" (Luke 15:16)?

Once we start doubting God's goodness – we will be attracted to Satan's deceptive bait...

Moses warned Israel not to forget God's goodness when they began to enjoy the blessings of the Promised Land (Deut. 6:10–15)... We need this warning today!

Not only IS God good – but secondly –

God gives only good gifts

Everything that is good in this world comes from God... If it did not come from God, it would not be good... If it comes from God, it must be good... Even if we do not see the goodness in it immediately – we can trust our Good God...

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was given to him by God and it seemed to be a strange gift ... yet Paul would come to acknowledge that it became a tremendous blessing to him... You can read about it in 2 Cor. 12:1–10.

Next, let's the truth – that –

The way God gives is good

Some say that you can translate the second clause, which reads "every perfect gift" as – "and every act of giving is good"...

It is possible for someone to give a gift in a manner – or in a way – that is less than loving... The value of a gift can be cheapened by the way it is given... But when God gives us a blessing, He does it in a loving, gracious manner... What He gives and how He gives are both good.

God is good, What He gives is good, the way He gives is good – and fourth –

God gives constantly

“**coming down**” is a present participle – meaning “**it keeps on coming down**”!

God does not give occasionally – He gives continually... Even when we do not see His gifts, He is still sending them... How do we know this? Because He tells us so and we believe His Word!

God does not change

“... **from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.**”

There are no shadows with the Father of Lights...

In his commentary on this passage, **Warren Wiersbe** said – “It is impossible for God to change. He cannot change for the worse because He is holy; He cannot change for the better because He is already perfect. The light of the sun varies as the earth changes, but the sun itself is still shining. If shadows come between us and the Father, He did not cause them. He is the unchanging God. This means that we should never question His love or doubt His goodness when difficulties come or temptations appear.”

If King David had remembered the goodness of the Lord, he would not have taken Bathsheba and committed those terrible sins... At least this is what Nathan the prophet told the king.

2 Sam. 12:7–8 (NASB)

⁷ Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

Note the repetition of the word “**gave**” in this statement... God had been so good to David – yet David forgot God’s goodness and took the bait...

It was this attitude that helped to keep Joseph from sinning when he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife.

Gen. 39:7–9 (NASB)

⁷ It came about after these events that his master’s wife [i]looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” ⁸ **But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the**

house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. ⁹There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”

Joseph knew that all these blessings had come from God... It was the goodness of God, through the hands of his employer, that restrained him in the hour of temptation.

God’s gifts are always better than Satan’s bargains... Satan never gives any gifts – that is obvious, because whatever he offers you – you end up paying for them dearly...

Prov. 10:22 (NASB) “It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it”.

The next time you are tempted, think on the goodness of God in your life... If you think you need something – seek the Lord for His will in the matter and wait on Him to provide it... We should never mess around with the devil’s bait!

Consider the Richness Yielded by God’s Goodness (:17)

Realize the Redemption Provided by God’s Grace (:18)

¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

James used birth as a picture of desire leading to sin and death (1:15)... He also uses the metaphor of birth to explain how we can enjoy victory over temptation and sin...

The apostle John used a similar approach in –

1 John 3:9 (NASB) “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Look at that passage with me... The phrase “His seed” refers to the divine life and nature within the believer. It is exactly what Peter was referring to in –

2 Pet. 1:4 (NASB) “For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

When we are – in “born of God” – that is “born again” – we become partakers of His divine nature...

Note the characteristics of this birth.

It is Divine

¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

Jam. 1:18a (HCSB) “By His own choice, He gave us a new birth...”

Nicodemus thought he had to re-enter his mother’s womb to be born again, but he was wrong... This birth is not of the flesh – it is from above (John 3:1-7).

Our salvation is the work of God. Just as we did not bring about our own physical birth – we cannot

generate our own spiritual birth. It is when we put our trust in Jesus Christ – that we then experience this miracle that is produced by God Alone!

In his message on this passage, Pastor Phil gave two quotes that I want to repeat here:

John Phillips – the Puritan (1585-1663) – “We might never resolve the issues of divine sovereignty on the one side and human volition [choice] and accountability on the other. The fact is certain that the initiative in our salvation is God’s.”

C.H. Spurgeon – “From the Word of God I gather that damnation is all of man, from top to bottom, and salvation is all of grace, from first to last. He that perishes chooses to perish; but he that is saved is saved because God has chosen to save him.”

The first characteristic of the new birth is that it is Divine... The second is that –

It is of Grace

¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

We did not earn – or even deserve our salvation – God gave us spiritual birth because of His own grace and will!... John was clear about this –

John 1:13 (NASB) “who were born, not of blood (human descent) nor of the will of the flesh (human efforts) nor of the will of man, but of God.”

I like **Warren Wiersbe**’s commentary on this verse – “No one can be born again because of his relatives, his resolutions, or his religion. The new birth is the work of God.”

Next –

It is through God’s Word

¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth...

Our physical birth requires two parents... In a similar way – our divine birth has two parents: the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Jesus said – John 3:6 (NASB) “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

The Apostle Paul will say the same thing –

Eph. 1:13 (NKJV) “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

The Holy Spirit through Peter later wrote –

1 Pet. 1:23 (NASB) “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”

The Spirit of God uses the word of God to bring about the miracle of God – which is called the new birth.

Since the Word of God is “living and active” (Heb. 4:12). – It can generate life in the heart of the sinner who trusts Christ, and that life is God’s life.

Heb. 4:12 (NASB) “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

A couple of other key passages that speak to the point of the necessity of our hearing and receiving God’s Word:

Rom. 10:17 (NASB) “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

Col. 1:3-5 (NASB)

³ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel

The characteristics of this new birth – which is the solution to our sin problem – is Divine in nature, by God’s Grace, through the means of His Word, and –

It is the Best Life Possible

18 ... so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

Look at the last phrase in our text: We are “a kind of first fruits among His creatures”.

James wrote to Jewish believers, and the word firstfruits would be very meaningful to them...

The OT Jews brought the firstfruits to the Lord as the expression of their devotion and obedience.

Pro. 3:9 (NKJV)

Honor the Lord with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase

The point that James is making is – of all the works of God seen throughout the universe ... of all the creatures He has made – the highest and most desirable to be – is one in whom He has given the new birth!...

[] We heard the truth of this in Bo Bowman’s testimony a couple of weeks ago... Neither he, nor any true Christian would want to trade their life in Christ with anyone or anything!

Why could we say that?... It is because we share God’s nature – and because of this – it is literally us – beneath our dignity to accept Satan’s bait or to crave sinful things... A higher birth means a higher life.

Here is an interesting observation that others have made about value and importance our new birth in Christ is to God and to those who receive it:

By granting us a new birth, God declares that He cannot accept the old birth. Throughout the Bible, God rejects the firstborn and accepts the second-born. He accepted Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau. He rejects your first birth (no matter how noble it might have been in the eyes of men), and He announces that you need a second birth.

It is this experience of the new birth that brings us into a right relationship with God and that relationship is what helps us overcome temptation! If we let the old patterns of life (from the first birth) take over – we will fail!... We received our old self (the flesh) from Adam, and he failed... But if we yield to the new life we have in Christ – we will succeed – for that new nature comes from Him Who is THE Victor over sin!

Remember – this new person that we become in Christ – must grow and mature! And how do we do that?... We must be feasted on the Word of God! We are strengthened then for the battle... Again –

Rom. 10:17 (NASB) “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

And –

1 Pet. 2:2 (NASB) “like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation”

God wants you and me to grow – to mature –

2 Pet. 3:18 (NASB) “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Just as the Holy Spirit used the Word of God to give you spiritual birth, He uses the Word to give you spiritual strength.

Jesus said it best – and He was quoting Scripture when He said it –

Matt. 4:4 (NASB) “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”’”

No matter what excuses we make, we have no one to blame for sin but ourselves. It’s our own unchecked desires that lead us into temptation and sin. God is not to blame... But it is when we turn to Him in our moments of temptation that we find His victory to be overcomers!

1 Cor. 10:13 (NASB) “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

Rom. 8:37 (NASB) “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved

us.”

Questions to consider in Community Group:

How does focusing on God’s goodness (:17), helpful to us in overcoming temptation? (He Himself is good, He only gives good gifts, the way He gives is good, He gives constantly, and He never changes.)

It was stated that – “Our physical birth requires two parents... In a similar way – our divine birth has two parents”. If that is so, who – or rather – what are they? (The Word of God and the Spirit of God.) Please explain.

- Warren Wiersbe said – *“No one can be born again because of his relatives, his resolutions, or his religion. The new birth is the work of God.”* John Phillips said – *“We might never resolve the issues of divine sovereignty on the one side and human volition [choice] and accountability on the other. The fact is certain that the initiative in our salvation is God’s.”* And C.H. Spurgeon said – *“From the Word of God I gather that damnation is all of man, from top to bottom, and salvation is all of grace, from first to last. He that perishes chooses to perish; but he that is saved is saved because God has chosen to save him.”* – Which of these quotes helped you the most to understand the Biblical view of our salvation? Which one might be the most challenging and why?

What were the truths presented about our salvation, based on verse 18? (Divine, grace, through the Word, “best life possible”) Is the Christian life really the “Best Life Possible”? Why?

What cross-reference in the message encouraged you the most? What other Scriptures come to your mind that help illustrate truths that you heard?

Based on what we’ve learned so far from James chapter 1, what are some of the most practical take-aways we need to apply to our lives that will assure us of being able to persevere in the face of trials, and to overcome temptations?