

Mar 13, 2022 Pastor Sam Horn

TRIUMPHING OVER TEMPTATION

Learning to Resist When Trials Turn into Temptations

“A Journey Through James”

Sermon 3

Texts: (Four Key Passages – 3 Essential Voices)

James 1:13–18: *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

1 Peter 1:6–7: *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 4:12–13, 19: *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. . . ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Introduction:

This morning as we continue our journey through James, our guide is going to help us navigate a particularly difficult part of the trail that comes up early in the journey, and that has the potential of delaying us, debilitating us, or even derailing us from completing the journey successfully. And this difficult part of the trail has to do with the temptations that will come upon us as we travel.

As we prepare to follow James through this part of the trail (1:13-18), we need to make sure we have a good grasp of the map that James has laid out for us.

James is writing to encourage believers to *cultivate and display a living faith to a dying world*. And, he has been very clear as to what that kind of faith looks like – *it is a faith that is whole-hearted, single-focused, and fully trusting in God and in His Word*.

In 1:2-12 James tells us how this kind of strong faith is formed in us – through the tool of a divinely designed trial. In other words, James wants us to know that a living faith is forged by the tool of trials, and what grows a strong faith in the middle of a divinely designed trial is endurance (1:3-4).

James also reminds us that two things will be required of us if we wish to successfully endure a God-sent trial: 1) Wisdom from above (1:5); and 2) a whole-hearted, single-focused commitment to trust and obey God (1:6-8).

In other words, the believer who seeks and embraces “wisdom from above” with a whole-hearted, single-focused, fully-trusting faith will endure and mature in his/her faith. However, *the double-minded believer* whose faith in God is not whole-hearted or single focused or fully trusting will not embrace God’s wisdom and the desires of his divided heart will deceive him by dragging him away from the path by enticing him to disobey God and sin.

And James warns us of a particularly dangerous reality – the circumstances that God intends to use to build our faith (a trial) can become a tool Satan uses to get us to disobey God (a temptation).

James informed us that every person who successfully endures the trials God sends will receive a crown of life (1:12)! However, the reminder also reveals it is entirely possible for a believer to fail the test by not enduring under the pressure that comes when we are under a trial. And this is what James addresses next – what are we to do when a difficult and prolonged trial becomes the occasion for a strong temptation. *James is going to arm us with five important concepts that will keep us safely on the path to a living faith!*

I. A Strong Exhortation: (1:13)

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

James uses the term **"temptation" 5x in this section** – clearly, he has made a shift from the trials that build our faith to something else – temptations that can destroy our faith! And the concept of temptation is the key idea in this section. James is going to talk straight to believers about the real and present danger temptation poses to a whole-hearted, single-focused, fully-trusting living faith.

A. A Practical Observation

Let no one say when he is tempted

- James prefaces his exhortation with two important points he wants to make by means of how he structures the information in this verse:
- **First**, James uses grammar that indicates that the person he has in mind is right in the middle of an ongoing temptation that has come upon him/her – (present tense passive verb).
- **Second**, James uses terminology to indicate the circumstances behind the temptation are the same circumstances behind the trial (the term for temptation is the same word James used for trials).
- This leads us to two important conclusions –
 1. ***Trials test our faith and reveal its true condition*** – whether our faith is truly whole-hearted, single-focused, or fully trusting.
 - 2.
 3. ***Temptations test our character and reveal its true loyalty*** – whether we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength or whether we love ourselves and our desires more than we love pleasing God.
- In other words, trials are intended to reveal what is in our hearts and build strength and maturity into our faith.
- BUT ... there is someone else in the picture with a very different agenda who is eager to use the trial for his own wicked purposes – to damage your faith, distance you from God, and derail your spiritual walk. And he is an expert at turning trials into temptations!

B. The Personal Prohibition

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God

- James makes a very clear statement – when you are in the middle of a trial that turns into a temptation – do not say that God is the reason you are being tempted. In other words, do not blame God for the temptation or for your failure to resist. (cf. “be slow to speak 1:19).
- You might say, well, who would do this? Answer – a man named Adam and a woman named Eve. They were given a test to see what was in their heart ... would they love God more than anything that attracted their eye or allured their heart, or would they yield to the seductive words and false promises of the tempter? You know how the story ends. And after they fell, God graciously sought them out and the first thing they did was find someone to blame and in their own way, they subtly put the blame on God. Adam blamed God by pointing to the woman that He had so graciously given. Eve blamed God by pointing to the serpent that God had created (Gen 3:12-13).
- You and I are not exempt from this temptation inside the temptation – especially if we fail to resist and are faced with the consequences of our actions or words. We are tempted to blame God for allowing the temptation or for sending the temptation. And James holds up his hand and in essence tells us to put our hand over our mouth – “Do not say that God is tempting you!”

C. The Profound Reason

for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

1. We must not do this because it is a ***massive deception***.
 - When we speak this way about God, we have actually been deceived a second time. First, we were deceived by the temptation itself, and now we are buying into a second massive deception – that God is somehow at fault.
 - The language James uses for deception (1:16) describes someone who is wandering away from the truth or the “way” (cf. 5:19).
 - James is a book about two ways or paths – the way marked by wisdom from above and the way marked by wisdom from below.

- And when you blame God for the temptation that you did not resist, you have not just wandered away from the will of God, you have bought into an even greater deception from Satan the accuser. In other words, you were deceived off the right path!
2. We must not do this because it is an ***erroneous conclusion***.
 - It is erroneous because it misses a fundamental reality about God – He is untemptable. His nature is fully and completely righteous and there is nothing in it that would respond to the temptation to evil – therefore He is not tempted because no evil desire exists in God. Because of who He is and what He is like in His very nature – He is untemptable. And because this is a foundational reality, blaming God for the temptation is not just wrong, it is wicked.
 3. We must not do this because it is a ***wicked assertion***.
 - To say that He tempts men is to charge God with the very goal and action of Satan. Satan is the one who wants to lure you away from loving and obeying God and he will use anything God has given for your good as means to get you to disobey or displace God.
 - Temptations are fundamentally designed to work by deception—by presenting a deadly lie as desirable truth.
 - God on the other hand never does this! God never lies ... He always tells the truth (Titus 1:2). He is always working all things for your good and for His glory (Romans 8:28)

So, if God is not the source of temptation ... where does it come from, how does it work, and what is its end?

II. A Sobering Explanation: (1:14-15)

*But **each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.**¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

A. *The Source of Temptation (1:14)*

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

- Later in the book James will remind us that behind temptation stands a tempter, Satan, whom we must resist with the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells us (4:7).
- However, in this particular text – which is the single most detailed explanation of how temptation works – James does not focus our attention on the external enemy who uses temptation against us. Instead, James makes us look within ourselves to see what it is inside us that makes temptation so tempting. So where do they come from?
 1. Our individualized inordinate desires
 - temptation is a personal experience – “each person”
 - temptation is an individualized experience – “his own desire”
 - The term “desire/lust” speaks of a strong, compelling desire that is deformed or inordinate because it craves for something God has prohibited or it is repulsed by something God has commanded.
 2. That rises up from our “flesh”
 - The flesh is that part of humanity that was irreparably broken when Adam fell and introduced a “sin nature” to all of his descendants.
 - This part of us will never be redeemed – it was unaffected by what happened to us when we were saved. We received a new nature when we became a new person in Christ. Until we get to heaven, our bodies (including our flesh) are still affected by the curse.
 3. Which is implacable in its hostility to God and insatiable in its appetite for unrighteousness.
 - Not only is our flesh unredeemable, but it is also openly hostile to God and incapable of obeying God’s righteous Law.
 - Said differently, our flesh doesn’t want to obey God nor can it obey God. This is what Paul meant when he said: *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. (Romans 8:7).*

B. The Course of Temptation (1:14-15)

*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.*¹⁵ *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

- Temptation ***drags us away*** and ***entices us by arousing*** the strong desires/cravings of our flesh – James uses a hunting word (lured) and a fishing word (enticed) to describe how temptation arouses the inordinate desires of our flesh (the desires of the flesh – the desire to experience; the desires of the eye – the desire to have; and the pride of life – the desire to be).
- Those inordinate desires when allowed unresisted growth ***give birth*** to a sinful word or deed.
- Sin when it is allowed to continue unconfessed, unchallenged, and uncontested will eventually bring forth something – death.
- This is why Paul told us to do something difficult – a wholehearted, single-focused, fully trusting faith requires that we ***mortify*** our flesh (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5).
- When we fail to mortify our flesh and allow its inordinate desires to grow into sinful behavior that we refuse to repent of and fight against, eventually these desires of the flesh will lead to behavior worthy of death under God’s law.

III. A Personal Warning: (1:16)

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

- This is a very ***serious warning***. The intensity of James’ speech indicates that some of his readers were in the process of being deceived in the midst of the temptation that had overtaken them.
- This is a very ***real and present danger*** – the problem with being deceived is not just that you are wrong on a matter. The term “deception” as James uses it implies that you have wandered away from some aspect of the truth God has given you in His Word – “The Wisdom from Above” in 1:5, 18, 21, and 25. In fact, by 5:19, James tells us that some of his readers have wandered from the truth.
- This is a very ***sobering self revelation*** because if we are honest about our response to temptation, it reveals an area of our heart that is divided or double minded and it reveals that we are aligning ourselves as friends with the world system that is hostile to the God we claim to love and serve. And when we align ourselves with the world, we have sided with those who are at enmity with God – and His Spirit will go to war with our flesh to win us back (4:6-9)

- Which brings us to a big question – if trials can easily turn into temptations, why does God send them? James has already told us that trials are sent by God to build our faith (1:3-4). However, trials serve at least three other important functions as revealed in three examples:

1. God used a test to **confirm and affirm** Abraham’s faith

*Genesis 22:12: He (God) said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, **for now I know that you fear God**, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”*

*Hebrews 11:17–19: By faith Abraham, **when he was tested**, offered up Isaac, and **he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son**,¹⁸ of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”¹⁹ **He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead**, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

2. God used a test to **expose what was truly in Israel’s heart** in the wilderness – would they love and trust God or would their cravings lead them to turn against God and disobey His will?

*Deuteronomy 8:2: And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, **testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not**.*

3. God used a test to **validate and vindicate the true worthiness** of Jesus as His appointed Champion and Savior of the World.

*Luke 4:1–2: And Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and **was led by the Spirit in the wilderness² for forty days, being tempted by the devil**. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.*

And to counter the deception that James warns against, he reveals an amazing truth that will keep us on the path so that trials do not become temptations that cause us to wander away from the truth that shapes a whole-hearted, single-focused, fully-trusting faith in our hearts.

IV. The Truth from Above: (1:17)

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.***

Since the bitter taste of failing a temptation can easily entice believers to blame God for allowing or even sending the temptation, James has issued two very serious and sober warnings:

- 1). Don't sin in speaking this way about God (1::13)
- 2). Don't be deceived in your mind about His true nature toward you or his good purpose for you! (1:16)

Instead, focus on an amazing truth about God that will help you to be slow to speak against Him and in fact, will give you great help in enduring the trial and resisting the temptation. So what is that truth?

A. God is a Perfect, Unchanging Giver who Never Wanders

*... the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.***

- James describes God as the “Father of Lights” – this is a reference to God as Creator of the universe in which we all live. He is the source of the heavenly lights. But what does James want us to know about God as Creator?
- Unlike His creation, there is no variation or change in God. In other words, unlike His creation that has changed and turned (wandered), God remains unchanged and never wanders in His nature or purpose.
- When did Creation turn and wander from its true purpose? After sin and the Fall resulted in the curse (Gen 3:17-19; Eccl.1:12-15).
- In other words, the first Creation wandered from its original purpose but God has never wandered from His ultimate purpose!
- So, ***what does God*** who never wanders from His original purpose ***plan to do with His creation*** that has wandered from its purpose? He plans to redeem and restore it to its former glory and purpose (Rom. 8:18-25). Even more importantly, ***how does God plan to accomplish this amazing restoration*** of His wandering creation? ***By means of good and perfect gifts He is sending down from above!***

B. God Only Gives Good and Perfect Gifts from Above

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,

1. His righteousness is coming down from heaven (Rom 1:18 / 3:21-22)
2. His Son came down from heaven (John 1:14; Eph 4:8-10)
3. His Word has come down from heaven (1:5; 3:17)
 - What did God will to do by means of these good and perfect gifts – specifically by means of His Word?
 - He determined to establish a New Creation that would not be marred by sin, ruined by the Fall, and under the curse!
 - Just as He was the “Father” of the original Light bearers to shine throughout the first creation, He determined to “Father” new Light bearers to shine the light of His glory in the new Creation!
 - So, rather than being the source of temptation, God has actually provided the solution to all temptation (1 Cor 10:13) as well as the sin and death that exist in the world under the curse (Rev 21:3-5).
 - This sounds absolutely amazing! BUT how do we know it is true?

V. The Proof here Below: (1:18)

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

- Question: What is the proof of the goodness of God’s gift and more importantly of the good purpose that God has for you and me?
- Answer: He willed to use one of His good and perfect gifts (the word of truth) to birth (bring forth) new Creation people (believers) who would be lights in this present evil darkness (Matt 5:14; Eph 5:8-9; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Where temptation brings forth death; God’s good gift of the “word of truth” brings forth true life that is eternal and fulfilling!
- And these people are “firstfruits” which means three important things:
 1. They belong exclusively to God and not the World.
 2. There are more of them to come.
 3. They are the first evidence of what the Father of Lights intends to do when He restores all of creation to its original condition and state!

Conclusion:

And God uses the pressure of trials to display the beauty, authenticity, and credibility of their faith! NO WONDER Satan wants to do all he can to turn that trial into a temptation that will undermine all of this!

But what happens when a believer yields to a temptation and wanders from the path? And what if they have actually committed sins worthy of death? Is there a way back for such a person? And if so, what will his status be before God after having committed the kind of sins James calls spiritual adultery (4:4ff)? What if anything does James have to say about such a person? Listen to his words: *James 5:19–20: My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and **someone brings him back**,²⁰ let him know **that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.***

Well, this sounds great but I would sure feel more comfortable if I had an actual example of this in the Bible! Actually, there is an example with which almost every Christian is familiar – David’s sin with Bathsheba. By the end of the story, David had intentionally broken every one of the ten commandments and stood guilty and worthy of death.

And yet David lived! And moreover, not only did he live but he was restored to full favor with God – to the point that after his sin with Bathsheba, God actually gave him one of the most amazing and foundational covenants in the OT – the Davidic Covenant! How did this happen? Answer – God forgave David by His mercy and restored David by His grace. How did David get this merciful forgiveness and gracious restoration? He repented and confessed his sin to God and God forgave and restored David. And He used the prophet Nathan to bring back His wandering sheep!

And to make sure you and I know that this same mercy and grace is available to us today, God inspired David to write it all down in two inspired psalms – Psalm 51 and Psalm 32! John reminds us of this (1 John 1:9) and James exhorts us to return to the path (5:19-20)! Truly God has given us good gifts!

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Introduction:

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James is going to arm us with five important concepts that will keep us safely on the path to a living faith!

I. A Strong _____: (1:13)

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” *for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*****

A. A Practical _____.

Let no one say when he is tempted

1. *Trials test our _____ and reveal its true*
2. *Temptations test our _____ and reveal its true _____.*

B. The Personal _____.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God

C. The Profound _____.

for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

1. We must not do this because it is a _____.
2. We must not do this because it is an _____.
3. We must not do this because it is a _____.

So, if God is not the source of temptation ... where does it come from, how does it work, and what is its end?

II. A Sobering Explanation: (1:14-15)

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

A. The _____ of Temptation (1:14)

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

- Our individualized inordinate desires
- That rise up from our "flesh"
- Which is implacable in its hostility to God and insatiable in its appetite for unrighteousness.

B. The _____ of Temptation (1:14-15)

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

III. A Personal _____: (1:16)

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

A. God used a test to _____ Abraham's faith

Genesis 22:12: He (God) said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, **for now I know that you fear God**, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

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C. God used a test to _____ the true worthiness of Jesus.

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IV. The _____ from Above: (1:17)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.**

A. **God is a Perfect, Unchanging _____ who Never _____** *... the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.***

B. **God Only Gives _____ and _____ Gifts from Above** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,*

V. The _____ here Below: (1:18)

*Of his own **will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits** of his creatures.*

- **Question:** What is the proof of the goodness of God's gift and more importantly of the good purpose that God has for you and me?

- **Answer:** He willed to use one of His good and perfect gifts (the word of truth) to birth (bring forth) new Creation people (believers) who would be lights in this present evil darkness (Matt 5:14; Eph 5:8-9; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Where temptation brings forth death; God’s good gift of the “word of truth” brings forth true life that is eternal and fulfilling!
- And these people are “_____” which means 3 important things:
 1. They belong exclusively to God and not the World.
 2. There are more of them to come.
 3. They are the first evidence of what the Father of Lights intends to do when He restores all of creation to its original condition and state!

Conclusion:

What happens when a believer yields to a temptation and wanders from the path? Is there a way back for such a person? *James 5:19–20: My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and **someone brings him back,** ²⁰ let him know **that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.***

An Old Testament Example: _____ and _____

A New Testament Exhortation: Repent and Confess (1 John 1:9)