

Do Not Err, My Beloved Brethren
James 1:12-18

James 1:12-18 reads, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

With **James 1:12-18** we come to the third paragraph of this epistle. Again we remember that the Holy Spirit inspired purpose for this epistle is to provide pastoral counsel for a spiritually mature walk in the believer’s life. Even so, this third paragraph gives counsel concerning a right motivation for endurance in godliness, concerning a right attitude toward the Lord our God, and concerning a right understanding of temptation to sin.

The first sentence of the paragraph (**verse 12**) immediately promises a sure blessing upon those who are faithful to endure the trials of life through an obedient love unto the Lord. Then the remainder of the paragraph extensively presents a serious warning for those who fall away at sinful temptation through the enticement of their own selfish desires. Primarily, this paragraph is intended to motivate us unto faithful endurance in godliness through love for our Lord. Yet because we so often fall into sin under life’s trials, this paragraph adds a warning against blaming the Lord our God for the temptation unto which we yielded. Thus the admonition is pronounced in the midst of the paragraph, “Do not err, my beloved brethren” (**verse 16**).

Overall, this paragraph presents five truths for our consideration. These five truths are arranged in order to move our understanding from the outside toward the center. Thus the first and fifth of these truths speak concerning our motivation for endurance in godliness. Then the second and fourth of these truths speak concerning our attitude toward the Lord our God. Finally, the third and central truth speaks concerning our understanding of temptations to sin.

I. *The Promise of an Eternal Reward*

As has been noted, the opening sentence immediately promises a sure blessing. In **verse 12** God’s Word declares, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Herein the focus is not simply upon a temporal blessing in this life, but upon an eternal reward in the life to come. Thus we are brought to consider the promise of an eternal reward. The Lord our God has promised “the crown of life” to those who love Him throughout their daily walk in this life. Yea, our Lord has promised this eternal reward to those who demonstrate their love for Him by enduring aright the many, various trials, troubles, and tribulations of this life. Each and every believer who faithfully endures aright is in the place of blessing and shall receive this eternal reward from our Lord’s hand.

Yet what does it mean to endure aright? This verse speaks of the individual “that endureth temptation.” With the word “temptation,” we return to that subject which was previously introduced in **verses 2-3**. In the context of **verses 2-3**, the phrase “diverse temptations” referred to the trying of our faith through the many, various trials, troubles, and tribulations of life. Flowing from that context, **verse 12** also employs the word “temptation” in reference to the trying of our faith, presenting “the man that endureth temptation” as the one who “is tried” and found worthy of reward. So then, to endure aright means to endure under the trials of life without yielding to sin in either attitude or action. It means to endure under the trials of life without wavering from a faithful walk in obedience and godliness. These are the individuals who maintain true love unto the Lord, for those that love Him faithfully keep His commandments (**John 14:21, 23**). Even so, the Lord our God has promised “to them that love Him” that they “shall receive the crown of life.”

II. *The Prohibition against a False Accusation*

Yet the use of the word “temptation” in **verse 12** does serve as a transition from the truth and teaching of **verse 2-3** concerning the trying of our faith to the truth and teaching of **verses 13-15** concerning our temptation unto sin. Even so, in **verse 13** God’s Word declares, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” Indeed, within every situation wherein our faith is tried, there is also a temptation to commit sin in either attitude or action. Thus we are brought to consider the prohibition against a false accusation. **Verses 2-3** reveal our Lord’s purpose in the trying of our faith that we should grow in spiritual maturity. **Verse 12** reveals our own responsibility in the trying of our faith that we should endure without spiritual wavering. Yet **verses 13-15** reveal our own fault in the trying of our faith when we yield therein to sinful temptation.

God’s Word does reveal that the Lord our God is directly instrumental in arranging and accomplishing the trying of our faith. Because of this we may think to indicate or imply that He is at fault when we yield unto sin in the midst of these trials. Yet this would be a false, and even blasphemous, accusation against our all-holy and all-righteous Lord God. Thus the opening portion of **verse 13** directly prohibits any such accusation, saying, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” We are directly commanded never, *no not ever*, to indicate, or even imply, that any temptation to sin is from the Lord our God. Both His character and His conduct make this absolutely impossible. In character He “cannot be tempted with evil.” In character He is absolutely pure and righteous. In character He despises all sin with absolute disgust and hatred. Furthermore, flowing out of His all-righteous character, in conduct “neither tempteth he any man” with evil. Yes, the Lord our God does try our faith for our spiritual growth; but it is never His purpose to entice unto sin.

III. *The Process of Sinful Temptation*

So then, how are we tempted unto sin? **Verses 14-15** gives answer, saying, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” The source of temptation to sin is not to be found from the Lord our God, but is to be found within

our own hearts. We are tempted unto sin when we are drawn away and enticed of our own selfish desires. Thus we are brought to consider the process of sinful temptation. Three steps are revealed in this process. First, we encounter the character of sinful temptation; for temptation has power over us as we are drawn away from the Lord and enticed unto sinfulness through our own selfish desire. Second, we encounter the conception of selfish desire; for when we permit our own selfish desire to conceive, it gives birth to sinful behavior. Third, we encounter the consequence of sinful behavior; for when sinful behavior in any form comes to completion, it brings forth spiritual destruction and death. Even so, through this process we are brought to understand that sinful temptation, sinful behavior, and spiritual destruction is our own fault; for it is all rooted to our own selfish desire.

IV. *The Pronouncement of a Loving Admonition*

It is a very serious matter for us to understand these truths from **verses 13-15**. Concerning these truths **verse 16** declares, “Do not err, my beloved brethren.” Thus we are brought to consider the pronouncement of a loving admonition. This is a serious admonition. We must not be deceived and go astray into error on these truths. Yet this is also a loving admonition. With a great burden of love, James admonished the scattered Jewish believers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as his “beloved brethren.” In like manner, the Holy Spirit admonishes us with a great burden of love through His inspired Word. Even so, through a great burden of love, we are admonished not to err in thinking that the Lord our God is the source of our temptations. Again through a great burden of love, we are admonished not to err in following after the sinful ways of our selfish desire. Yet again through a great burden of love, we are admonished not to err in denying the fault of our own selfish desire when we sin. Finally, through a great burden of love, we are admonished not to err in believing that our sinful behavior will not result in our destruction. Yet this loving admonition not only looks back to the truths of **verses 13-15**, but also looks forward to the truth of **verses 17-18**. Thus through a great burden of love, we are admonished not to err in forgetting the provision of God’s unchanging goodness.

V. *The Provision of God’s Goodness.*

In direct contrast to the false accusation that the Lord our God is the source of temptation, **verse 17** declares, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Thus we are brought to consider the provision of God’s goodness. In character and in conduct, the Lord our God cannot Himself be tempted with evil; neither does He tempt any one else with evil. He is not the source of temptation. Rather, He is the Source of “every good gift and every perfect gift.” He is “the Father of lights.” He is the Source of light, both physically and spiritually. He created the lights of heaven to provide physical light upon the earth. He sends forth the spiritual light of His Word to guide us unto salvation and spiritual growth. He is light, “and in him is no darkness at all” (**1 John 1:5**). Although the lights of the earth may vary in their light and may create shadows through their turning, He is an unchanging light of glorious holiness and righteousness. In character there is no variability in His holy and righteous nature. In conduct He produces no shadow of spiritual darkness, for He never turns from the light of perfect holiness and righteousness. Even so, from Him comes down all true goodness; and from Him never comes temptation to evil.

In fact, one of the greatest gifts that the Lord our God has given unto us out of His abundant goodness is the gift of our new birth. Thus **verse 18** declares, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” In contrast to sin that brings forth spiritual death, the Lord our God and heavenly Father has begotten us again unto newness of spiritual life. This He did out of His own good will. This He did through His Word of truth, the gospel. This He did in order that we might be “a kind of firstfruits” unto His glory. Certainly then, in His unchanging goodness the Lord our God would never contradict His good provision and purpose by tempting us unto sin. “Do not err, my beloved brethren.”