

# When Trials Turn To Temptation

*Non Series – James*

By Richard Caldwell Jr.

**Bible Text:** James 1:13-18

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The book of James chapter 1 is where we are this morning if you would join with me, please, in turning there. James 1. We've come in our study of this chapter to verses 13 through 18 but I want to read beginning at verse 2. Though it will take us a little bit longer to do our reading this morning, I want to read here to put these verses in their context. James 1, beginning in verse 2,

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. 9 Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, 10 and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. 12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Now we come to our verses for this morning,

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. 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.

Verse 13 says again, "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." Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, we pray that this morning when we emerge from this time of preaching we will have a clear understanding of who you are, a better understanding, Lord, of who we are and of our desperate need for you in every way and in every aspect of who we are and how we live. I pray also, Lord, for the lost in our midst that they would see their need for Jesus, their need for the forgiveness of their sins, their need to be reconciled to you and that Jesus is the only way, their only hope and that he lives and that he is able to save forever those who come to him by faith. I pray, Lord, that your church will be encouraged and washed, corrected and strengthened. Lord, let your word accomplish its mighty work in our lives this morning. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, in this chapter we've been learning about trials and we've learned a lot about trials. We saw the initial command in verse 2 that we are to count it all joy when we meet with trials of various kinds, that that's the challenge that calls forth the command. The challenge is the fact that we are going to meet with trials of various kinds and we saw the comfort in verse 3 that we know something. We know the testing of our faith is not without purpose; it produces steadfastness. So in verse 4 we were exhorted to cooperate, to cooperate with our tests, "let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Then the Lord told us to do when we don't know what to do in the midst of our test, verse 5, if we lack wisdom, we ask him and we recognize that he gives generously to all without reproach. It will be given him, we were given that assurance. You ask God for wisdom, child of God, and he grants that kind of request but we have to be ready to do his will. We're asking God what to do because we're ready to do what would represent his will and so in verses 6 through 8 we're told that we must not be double-minded. We ask in faith, ready to do what would be right in the sight of God. And in the midst of our test, we're often led astray by our circumstances and so we're told in verse 9 not to set our eyes on our circumstances but on our true spiritual position, our true spiritual state. If you're a man living in lowly circumstances, then take note of your exaltation in Jesus Christ. If you're someone who is being tempted and tested by prosperity, then remember who you are without Jesus. Humble yourself. And for all of us, we are to remember that our life is brief, death is sure, Eternity is ahead and so we don't put our confidence in the things of this world. Through it all, we remember this beatitude, this promise from God that the one who remains steadfast under trial, when he has withstood the test, he receives the crown of life. This is where we are headed towards this glorious future that God has promised to everyone who loves him.

Tests are real. Tests come in all different shapes and sizes and all kinds of variety and they are always hard. Do you agree this morning that trials are hard? And what we know in the midst of our trials is a sense of pressure. Trials always pressure us and we don't like pressure. We like pleasure. We like ease. We like relaxing. We don't like pressure but God knows that we need to be stressed. He knows that we need this. He tests us for the purpose of putting on display his work in our life. He tests us for the purpose of disciplining us and developing us. Our Father is wise in what he allows to come into our

lives and his motive behind everything that he allows to come our way is a good one. It's a loving one. It's a father's motive but we don't often like how it feels and so right – listen – right where we meet with tests, there is always a platform for temptation. From the standpoint of our Father, these are tests. These are trials for the purpose of proving us, for the purpose of developing us, for the purpose of developing in us that which will protect us. This is our Father's motive but at the very same time, we have a spiritual enemy who lurks around the edges of these tests and he is ready to offer us temptations, ways to escape the pressure, ways to relieve the pressure but ways that represent not believing God. Ways that represent disobedience to God. You see, every time you face a test, there is a platform for the enemy's work in terms of temptation. There is also a platform for what your flesh, your sinful flesh, desires. Because of the fall, we don't need the devil to desire sin, do we? There is a sin principle at work in people, lost people. They are in the flesh. Christians, the flesh is still in us and so there is a sin principle at work in us and as a result, we often would long to escape trials in a way that would represent disobedience to God. It is no wonder, is it, that after this long section on trials, the Holy Spirit, through James, would give us a word about temptation. This fits perfectly. This is exactly right because that's what we face. In the midst of every trial, we face the reality of temptations.

So what does he tell us here about temptation in verses 13 through 18? He gives us three very important pieces of information. He tells us where temptations come from. He tells us how they operate. He tells us how to overcome them. Where does temptation come from? And to be more specific, he assures us where they do not come from. Don't ever imagine they come from God. We'll talk about that this morning. So he tells us where they come from; he tells us how they operate. Tonight we'll come back and we're going to see a step-by-step description of how sin is conceived, how it is given birth and where it ends up and then he tells us how these temptations are overcome.

This morning what we're going to do and tonight, is we're going to take those three thoughts that we get from James 1:13-18 and we're going to put it into three statements for action. Three things that as believers we should do when we become mindful of temptation. I mean, there is a point in there when we become mindful of temptation, don't we? We become mindful of the fact that there is a battle going on within me, between what I know would honor God and please God and represent obedience to God, and that which would represent escaping the pressure but in a way that would be disobedience to God. I'm aware of the temptation, the question is what do I do when I'm mindful of temptation.

Today I want us to see three steps of action for believers, this is a sermon for Christians. If you're not a Christian then listen in. Your need is for Jesus and without Christ this cannot be lived out. This cannot be lived out apart from union with the Son of God but for Christians, three steps of action when we're mindful of temptation. This morning we look at the first one and it's this: when mindful of temptation, guard your thoughts about God. When mindful of temptation, guard your thoughts about God. Can I just say there is nothing more important in your entire life than how you think about God. At all times. At any time. There is nothing more important going on in your mind than how you think about God and so the Holy Spirit through James is warning us of something that when we

become mindful of temptations, one of the temptations in the midst of temptation is to think wrongly about God.

Guard your thoughts about God when you're mindful of temptation and right away we meet with a commandment and it's a commandment in the negative: he commands us not to think a certain way and not to give voice to such thoughts. Look at verse 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." He tells us two things here: he tells us what we must not say and he tells us why we must not say it. What we must not say, "Let no one say, 'I am being tempted by God.'" We must not say that. Why not? Because we know this to be true, "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."

Now, right away we need to ask: what is James talking about when he's talking about temptation? "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." What is he talking about? Verse 14, "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." Four times in verses 13 and 14 the word "peirazo" is used in the Greek text and that word just means "to put to the test." Earlier in the chapter, we saw twice the word "peirasmos" used. It's a noun. That word speaks of a test, a trial. So early on, he talks about tests, he talks about trials. Here he talks about putting someone to the test and the context makes clear that here this is a negative putting to the test. This is putting someone to the test in order to draw out from them a response that would represent sin. The temptation James is talking about in our verses this morning is an enticement to sin; a solicitation to sin; wanting to draw someone into sin. And though he doesn't name who it would be that would be enticing someone or soliciting someone, we know that our enemy is called the tempter. So in the midst of our test, we face a tempter, someone who would solicit us to evil when we have opportunities for obedience; someone who would invite us to disobey instead of obey in the midst of our trial. We have a tempter. Also we have indwelling sin that serves like a tempter that would invite us to disobey God in the midst of our stresses and problems and troubles and trials.

So I think to get at the heart of what he's telling us here in verse 13, I want to ask some questions. In fact, I want to give you four questions to think through as we get our hearts around verse 13. Here's the first question: to whom would we ever say such a thing? Right, "Let no one say," by the way, let me just stop there for a moment and say this: he makes clear when he says, "Let no one say," this is a universal commandment. I mean, this applies at all times to all believers for the rest of time because what he states in verse 13 will always be true. God is never tempted by evil. God never tempts anyone. That has always been true in the past, that is true today, that will always be true in the future so this commandment holds firm for the rest of time. "Let no one every say when he is tempted that 'I am being tempted by God.'"

Now, my question is this: to whom would we ever say such a thing? And the first and most dangerous audience for such words is the audience of self. You see, the only way we would ever say something like this to someone else is first we have accepted this thought within ourselves. That we would think within ourselves, that we would think in

our own mind, in our own hearts, even if we never gave voice to it that we would adopt the thought that somehow God is responsible for my allurements toward what is disobedience to him. Here I am considering disobedience, here I am attracted to that which he says is sin, here I am being drawn toward it and in some way, some shape, some form, some fashion, I am laying a measure of the blame at the feet of God for what I am struggling with. He says, "You must never do that."

But do you know this? After you begin to allow that thought to be accepted in your own mind and heart, there is a second audience: that's the audience of others. That we would actually say to someone else that, "I am being tempted by God." You say, "Does anybody ever talk like that? I mean, does anyone ever really say that God is responsible for their temptations?" All the time. All the time. In fact, just as providence would have it coming to this particular section in the sermon, I mean, at least three times this week I've had someone talk to me in a way where they were laying some measure of blame at the feet of God for their sins. As we begin to think like this, "Why God?" we've already begun to buy into this, haven't we? This lie that God is responsible for our sins? "Why? Why did you put me in this situation?" Or, "Why don't you relieve me of this situation? You know who I am. You know my weaknesses. You know my tendencies. You know what happens to me when I'm in these situations so why, why, why do you put me in these situations? Why God?"

The second question. So who do we say this to? We say it first to self and then when we accept such a thought, we begin to express it to others. I mentioned someone saying, what happened this week is someone basically said to me, "Why didn't God show me this sooner? Now I see clearly what I've done. Now I see clearly where my problems come from. Now I see clearly who I am. Why didn't God show me this sooner?" And in this particular case, I know firsthand because I sat through conversations with this person that many people who love this person very much told them the very things they say they knew nothing about. Told them, they just didn't listen. But, you see, laying some blame at God's feet. "Why didn't you show me this?"

The second question: why would we ever say such a thing? Okay, first of all, who do we say this to, to whom do we say it? We say it to ourselves, we say it to others. Why would we say such a thing? Why would anyone ever blame God for their temptations? Well, first of all, anger. People meet with the repercussions of their sinful choices and they get angry about it and so they want someone to blame. Anybody here ever know what it is to try to blame someone for what you're really responsible for just because you're angry? "Why? Why did you do this? And it's really your fault."

But not only anger, there's also pride at work. We want to justify ourselves. We don't want to own our sin. We don't want to own our temptations. We want to think that somehow we're above this and so instead of accepting 100% responsibility for what we're attracted to, what we're being drawn out toward, what we're considering doing or what we've done, we would love to be able to say that we went through all of our trials with flying colors. We've never had failures. We've never fallen short. We've never stumbled. But we know that's not true and the question is: what narrative are we going to adopt

when we fail? How are we going to process this? How are we going to think about it when we fail? Are we going to accept 100% responsibility or are we going to try and shift some of the blame to God? "The woman whom you gave to me." Isn't that what Adam said? "The serpent deceived me."

So in pride we try to excuse our own failure and what we do, this is amazing, what we do with such thoughts, what we do with such words is we turn holy God into an unholy tempter. This is especially frightening when you realize this is what Satan, this is Satan's name, tempter. Matthew 4:3, "And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.'" When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he is referred to in Scripture in God's holy word as the tempter. 1 Thessalonians 3:5, "For this reason, when I could bear it no longer," Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he says, "I sent to learn about your faith, for fear," here is what I was afraid of, "that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain." You see, this is another name for Satan. His name is tempter. So here are sinful people not wanting to take responsibility for their own temptations, their own sins, and in desiring to justify themselves, they would turn God, holy God, into an unholy tempter. Or to say it another way: they are willing to make God a devil.

They are willing to make God a devil in the interest of justifying themselves and people often do this with a confused understanding of the sovereignty of God. Here's how they sort of work it out intellectually: God is sovereign, he controls everything, he could have prevented this, he knows how weak I am so he put me in this situation knowing and desiring my failure. He must've wanted me to fail. And can I say to you, this is something we've got to come to grips with as Christians – listen – even if you don't know how to intellectually answer that, you are to be like a child and just believe God when he tells you you're wrong. That's what verse 13 tells us, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.'" Why? Why? "James, are you going to offer me this detailed, long, extended, intellectual argumentation and say why I'm wrong?" No, here's why you're wrong: because God is untemptable and he doesn't tempt anyone. Don't you know who he is? So if your understanding of the sovereignty of God would turn him into a devil, would turn him into a tempter, you have misunderstood who God is. Perish the thought, reject the thought, that's not who God is. "Why should I not say this sort of thing?" Because it's not true. It's not true.

So to whom would I say this? I begin by saying it to myself and then I voice it even perhaps to others and why do I say this sort of thing? Because I'm angry. I don't like the repercussions of my sinful choices. I want someone to blame and I'm proud. I don't want to 100% own my own temptations and sins because I want to somehow imagine that I'm not really 100% at fault. Third question: what do such words represent? When we think these things, reason this way within ourselves and maybe even give expression to it, what are we doing? What do these words represent? Believe it or not, they represent blasphemy. These are blasphemous thoughts. These are blasphemous words because we are attributing to God with these thoughts, we are attributing to God with these words, something that is absolutely untrue of him. We are slandering God. We are saying

something of God that isn't true of God. We are mischaracterizing God. We are assigning to God a wicked nature. That's blasphemous.

God cannot be tempted translates one word, by the way. When it says that he cannot be tempted with evil, cannot be tempted is literally he's untemptable. He is without temptation. That is, there is nothing in holy God that finds agreement with unholiness. There is nothing in holy God that affirms evil. There is nothing in holy God that would celebrate evil, encourage evil, want to see someone enticed to evil. That's not who God is. Because that's not who he is because he has no agreement with evil, he's even the Bible says, of such pure eyes that he won't look upon such things. If he is absolutely pure and holy, then what makes you think he would encourage you to do something he hates? He wouldn't. He wouldn't do that. He doesn't tempt anyone.

I want you to remember what a temptation is: a temptation is always a deception. A temptation in this context, to solicit someone to do evil, what is it? It's a deception. You're saying to someone, "This is what you should want to do. This is what would be enjoyable for you. This is what would be pleasurable to you. This is what would be good for you on some level. And in the end, as we'll see tonight, when temptations are accepted and sin is conceived and birthed, the end of such things is always death. So just as it was in the Garden, so it is today. The tempter comes and says, "This will be good for you," but the truth is what God has said about it is absolutely true and the wages of sin is death. So every temptation represents a deception so when you try to blame God for your temptations, what you're really saying to God is he's a deceiver. He's a deceiver. That's blasphemous. If you're a tempter, you're a deceiver. 2 Corinthians 11:3 says this, "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." You see, the tempter, Satan, is a deceiver. He deceived Eve. Revelation 12:9 says, "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan," next statement, "the deceiver of the whole world."

Do you realize what has gone on this week in our nation? It just represents a great deception. What's going on right now in our world is a great delusion. Now, it also represents a judgment from God because when God turns men over to their own deceitful way of thinking, that's judgment. When he takes the brakes off and he says, "I'm going to let you think the way you would think according to your sinful nature," that's not a good thing. So we're witnessing deceit, deception, delusion and judgment all at the same time. I mean, you mark this down, dear ones: the people celebrating so-called gay marriage and, by the way, it's not marriage and if you mean by couples, complementary relationships designed by God to be together, there is no such thing as a gay couple. When you talk about gay marriage and gay couples and people are celebrating it – listen – they really are celebrating it. They're not pretending to. I mean, they really believe it's good and right. What's sad, what's sad, what's heartbreaking both for the people involved in it and the people celebrating it is it's a great deception that's going to lead to destruction and death. God is not the author of such things.

So to assign temptation to God is to assign deception to God which is blasphemous. You say, "Well Richard, you said earlier and the verses say in verses 2, etc. that we're going to meet with trials and tests and God has a purpose for these things, right? He's using these things to produce steadfastness and then it has its full effect, it's perfect and complete. This is how God develops his people so doesn't God, in a sense, tempt people?" No. Listen, there's a difference between testing and tempting in this context. What confuses us is sometimes the testing and the tempting involve, in fact, I would venture to say perhaps every time, the same situation, the same circumstances, here we have the same life, the same set of circumstances and present in this situation is both testing from God and temptation from the evil one. The difference is the motive that lies behind the action and in the execution of the motive. So externally we are tested by a set of circumstances. God has allowed these things. It's an opportunity for obedience. It's an opportunity for development. It's an opportunity to put on display his glory. Then Satan walks in alongside these same circumstances and he solicits people to disobey God in this same situation and he actually acts upon that motive to try to lead them astray, to lure them aside, to lead them into death. No, God doesn't do that. He doesn't tempt.

William Varner said this speaking of God, "Since there is nothing in his character that would make him succumb to temptation, there is nothing in his character that would make him want anybody else to succumb to temptation so no one should blame him for a temptation or excuse their yielding to a temptation on the ground that God wanted him to yield." Again, this all figures into what's going on in our world today. This is so practical because you'll hear people say things, "Well, God just, you know, God just made me this way," and what they're talking about is their attraction to what God has identified as sin. "Well, God just made me this way," so now we're laying at the feet of God our desires for what God has said he hates and we do it, I'm not just talking about sexuality. I mean, people will say, "I know I've got a horrible temper but, you know, it's just the way God made me." Or they have suspicious nature and, "That's just the way God made me." You've got to distinguish between what is your own sinfulness and what God is pleased with and what he is at work producing in the life of his people.

So to whom do we say this? We say this first to ourselves, then we sinfully give voice to these kinds of thoughts to others. Why do we say such things? Because we're angry about the repercussions of our choices and we're proud. We don't want to own responsibility for our own temptations and our own sins. What do these words represent? They represent blasphemy. We take holy God and assign to him unholy motives. We would take holy God and turn him into a tempter, turn him into a deceiver, turn him into a devil. The fourth question, the last one this morning: what do such words forget? What do such words forget? When we think this way, what are we forgetting? Let me say it to you in the positive: one very important way that you can guard your thoughts about God, remember our main point, when mindful of temptation, guard your thoughts about God, one very important way you can guard your thoughts about God when you are mindful of temptation is to remember Jesus. Such words forget the Son of God.

"What do you mean, Richard?" Listen, in Jesus of Nazareth, we have God with us. Who is Jesus? He is Almighty God Incarnate. He is the second person of the Trinity who was

born of a virgin, came to earth, stepped out of heaven and came to earth so that in this person we had the God-man. God took to himself a human nature for the purpose redemption, saving sinful human beings and he walked on this planet that he made in the midst of creatures that exist because of him so that men came face-to-face with God. And when you look at God in human form, when you see God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man, do you see someone who would be drawn away by temptation? Who succumbed to temptation? Do you see someone who would ever leave those who followed him into sin? The answer, of course, is no. He was not one who was allured by the offer of sin. He is not one who ever found sin's offer to be acceptable to him. The holy Son of God rejected sin in all of its forms all the times with absolute perfection and he never led any of his followers into a pathway of sinner ever. He never led them in a way that he was tempting them to evil, ever. There you see God. There you see his nature.

Satan tempted Jesus. He was tempted, the Bible says, in all points as we are yet without sin. So, for example, Jesus was able to say this, John 14:30, "I will not speak much more with you for the ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in me." He has nothing in me. Nothing in Jesus made Satan's temptations attractive to Jesus. We'll see it tonight, when temptation is effective, the temptation matches up with a sinful desire in the person. That did not happen with Jesus because in him there was no sin. The temptation was real. The offer was real but there was nothing in Jesus that was attracted to the offer. This is why the Bible is able to make statements about Jesus that it could never make about you and me. For example, the Bible describes the nature of Jesus of Nazareth with statements like this, 1 John 3:5 says, "You know that he," that's Jesus, "appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin." In him there is no sin.

How many here this morning are aware of indwelling sin? Is there sin in you? But there was no sin in him. No sin in him in terms of his choices and no sin in him in terms of his nature. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says this, "he made," God the Father, "he made him," Jesus, "who knew no sin to be sin," that is a sin sacrifice on our behalf, "that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Isn't that glorious grace? That God the Father placed upon the sinless Son of God the guilt, the weight of all the sins committed by all those whom Jesus will save and he will save only those who trust in him as Lord and Savior. God placed the wrath that our sins deserved on his own Son, the sinless Son of God, so that we sinners might be made the righteousness of God in Jesus. God treated on the cross Jesus just as if he had lived my life and since he has saved me and I have placed my faith in Christ, God now treats me just as if I lived Christ's life. That's amazing grace."

Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." So for example, when Jesus was hungry in the wilderness and Satan offered him a temptation that involved bread, Jesus knew what it was to really feel hungry but he did not know what it was to desire that bread in a way that would represent sin against his Father. No, the temptation had no power over him in that sense. Luke 1:35 says, "And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit,'" speaking to Mary, "'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," for that reason, listen,

"the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." Holy offspring. Hebrews 7:26 says, "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." You see, that's Jesus. Holy. Altogether set apart. Completely pure. Absolutely without sin. Innocent. Undefiled. Untainted by sin. Separated from sinners. Truly human so that he could die for sinners but he wasn't a sinner.

When you think about what sin is, anything that violates the law of God, anything that violates the will of God, anything that's contrary to what pleases God and you think about what sin is and then you think about where it exists, right? I mean, the thoughts we think that don't please God. The attitudes we have that don't please God. The words we speak that don't please God. The things we know we should do but we don't do. The things we do that we shouldn't do. And on and on it goes. Motives and all the rest and Jesus was sinless. Sinless. Never a sinful thought. Never a sinful attitude. Never a sinful word. Never a sinful motive. That's Jesus. Even the demons recognized it. Mark 1:24, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God."

So in terms of his nature, the Bible says things about him that it could never say about us. Then we take note of how he leads his people. What is his attitude in leading his people? This is Jesus sinless and in that sense untemptable, in that sense. Not attracted with lust to sinful offers. What about now, will he lead people into temptation? Does he solicit people to evil? When he was with his men in the garden and the arrest was imminent and he knew their weakness, what did he say to them? Luke 22:40, "And when he came to the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" Luke 22:46, "and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" Here's Jesus not wanting them to give into temptation. And we are taught to pray this way, Luke 11:4, "and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." We're taught to pray in a way that says, "Lord, you know my weaknesses. You do so would you protect me? Would you make sure that I'm not put in a situation where I am not strong enough to obey you, to follow you?" Which, by the way, we'll get to this tonight: you do know sovereign God regulates all your tests in such a way that you are always able to obey him. He never allows you to be put in a situation that he knows is too great for his grace in your life in that situation so he's regulating every test you face. Obedience is always possible for the Christian in every given test.

If you ask, "What is the attitude of Jesus about us sinning? Does he want us in sin?" Well, just remember why he came. 1 John 3:8, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." Hebrews 2:14 says, "Since therefore the children," that's us, "share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things," flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might

become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house." What is the writer of Hebrews saying? Remember Jesus. When you're being tempted, you remember him. Not only his faithfulness in his own life, the example he sets for us in that way but his faithfulness to help those who are his, who would cry out to him for help. That's why verse 18 says, "For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Literally "to come to the aid of." He is able to come to the aid of those who are being tempted.

So what does verse 13 say to us? See and understand your God. Guard your thoughts about God when you're mindful of temptation. You would say that God is to blame for your temptations? You would think that God is somehow plotting for your spiritual failure? Don't you know who he is? Away with such thoughts. Those are blasphemous thoughts. They are lying thoughts. God is not a tempter. He is not a deceiver. He is holy and if you remember Jesus, you will know that's true.

So let me finish by just asking you this: do you know this God? Do you know him? Do you have a personal relationship with your Creator? Have you been brought into fellowship with the true and living God? There is only one true and living God and he has revealed himself in the pages of Scripture and he made himself known in the person of Jesus. Jesus is God come to earth, the God-man. Do you know him by knowing his Son? The Bible is clear there is only one way for you to have fellowship with your Creator, it is through the reconciliation that's affected by the blood of Jesus. Jesus came to die for sinners to reconcile men to God and so where there is faith in Christ, reconciliation has been affected. Where there is faith in Christ, there is fellowship with God but until there is faith in Christ, you're estranged from God, under the wrath of God headed for everlasting hell. Have you trusted in Jesus for life?

I've got good news for you, my friend, Jesus died for sinners. He died for sinners. He didn't die for sinless people, there aren't any. He died for sinners and your sins, all your sins. All your sins will be forgiven when you trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. He is not just a Savior though, my friend, he's the Master. You see, you come to him as Lord. Do you know him?

Then for Christians I would ask you: are you ready to bring your temptations to him? He is able to help those who are being tempted. He is able to come to the aid of those being tempted. When you are mindful of temptation, don't blame God for your temptations, run to God with them. Run to Christ. Will you do that? Will you take your temptations to him? Will you take full responsibility for your temptations? We're going to see it tonight, when you're being tempted, do you know what's happening? Something is going on in you. Something is going on inside you and the Spirit of God is going to walk us through step-by-step and explain what's going on inside of us. And where failure has taken place, will you take full responsibility for the failure, confess your sins and turn from them?

Stop blaming your circumstances because God has regulated those. You could have obeyed God there. Stop blaming your circumstances. Stop blaming others. Will you take full responsibility and confess your sin as sin and turn from it? And you mark this down: you cannot make provision for your sin and confess it, repent of it, at the same time. You can't be setting yourself up to live in it and then say you're sorry for it and want to be free from it at the same time. So will you confess and forsake? Confess and turn from sin to follow Christ wherever it is that you're mindful of temptation this morning? Would you confess it and turn from it?

Then finally I would say: remember Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Rest in his perfect faithfulness. I'm so thankful that my standing before God has not been established by my obedience but Christ's obedience. His perfect obedience. His death on the cross makes me right with God so now I pursue sanctification flowing out of the truth of justification. I've been ushered into this place of grace in which I stand and now I pursue obedience to God, not thinking that that makes me right with God but knowing that I've been made right with God through Jesus Christ, now I pursue obedience because I love the one who gave himself for me. I long to please the one who gave his life for me. Hebrews 12:1 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." I mean, we pursue obedience. We reject sin. We strive against sin to the point that if it means our life, we lose it. You're not there yet so keep striving. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood so keep resisting.

Last word. I think this is where many go wrong in the matter of sanctification: sanctification is not just remembering justification, sanctification is humbly, actively, aggressively, faithfully living out the results that exist in justification. Christ died not only to bring me forgiveness but to set me free and now I have a moment-by-moment, decision-by-decision freedom in Christ to choose a pathway that means obedience to God so let me with all my might run and where I stumble and fall and fail, I've got to own it and confess it and turn from it and follow Jesus. The church would say, Amen.

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, thank you for your word. Thank you, Lord, for these truths about who you are and I pray for us, Lord, that when we become mindful of temptation, we would guard our thoughts about you. That we would in no way want to assign blame to you for what are our wicked, sinful tendencies. Lord, work in your people in such a way that we would be putting away sin in all of its forms aggressively, faithfully. Lord, help us to remember our Savior, to keep our eyes fixed on the Author and Perfecter of our faith. And I pray for anyone who is outside the faith who doesn't know Christ. O Lord, have*

*mercy upon them today that they would cry out to your Son for life. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*