

# Triumphing over Temptation

**E.T.S.:** James pivots from discussing triumphing in trials to triumphing over temptations.

**E.S.S.:** James teaches us how to triumph over temptation.

**Christ Follower:** Develop your God-given defense against temptations to sin.

**Christ Seeker:** Believe in Christ Who saves from all sins.

## Introduction

Let's return to James chapter one for the preaching of God's Word. We looked at the first 12 verses in a recent message to learn about triumphing in trials. He taught us to adopt and develop four qualities: a joyful spirit, an understanding mind, a surrendered will, and a believing heart.

God led me back to James one today to continue this theme of triumph. Now, in addition to learning about triumphing in trials, James pivots to help us to learn about triumphing over temptations. Notice the nuance of words: triumphing **IN** trials and triumphing **OVER** temptations. While God often leads you to endure through trials, He designed for you to overcome and escape temptations.

Can we be transparent for a moment?

We all face temptations.

We all struggle with temptations.

We all succumb to temptations.

This isn't what God wants for us, but it is the story of our lives.

I thank God for a passage like 1 John 2:1-2.

## **Bible**

*(1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

*1 John 2:1-2 - KJV*

## **Introduction**

God doesn't turn away from or reject you if you face, struggle with, or succumb to temptations.

He gave Jesus for your forgiveness: past, present, and future!

Still, God provides for us to triumph over temptations. James writes to us about it in James 1:12-27.

## **Bible**

(12) 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. (13) 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: (14) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (15) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (16) Do not err, my beloved brethren. (17) 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. (18) Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: (20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (21) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (22) But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (23) For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: (24) For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. (25) But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (26) If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself

*unspotted from the world.*

*James 1:12-27 - KJV*

## **Introduction**

What help does James provide for us to triumph over temptation?

Consider these five thoughts.

# **1...Recognize the Process of Temptation (vv. 13-16)**

## **Explanation**

This whole section is predicated on this reality: God does not tempt anyone to sin. If you recall, we said in the previous look at this passage that maturity could be viewed as the theme of James. God wants you to mature and grow. He will not sabotage His own plan by drawing you to sin.

## **A...Sin's Cause (vv. 13-14a)**

## **Explanation**

James' words are not in any way attractive or complementary, as he reveals the true cause of sin.

There's a contrast here. The temptations, that are trials of faith, are things that come from outside of us. Temptations to sin, the discussion here, results from something that is already inside us connecting with something outside of us. The temptation, if we give in, only draws out what is already in us.

I've shared this quote before, but it is so instructive. It's written by Paul David Tripp. He wrote, "It's the heart that's the problem. People, locations, and situations don't cause me to sin; they're where the sin of my heart gets revealed. Sin is a matter of the heart before it is ever an issue of our behavior. This means that your and my biggest problem in life exists inside us and not outside us. It's the evil inside me that connects me to the evil outside me. So I must confess that I am my greatest problem. And if I confess this, I am saying that I don't so much need to be rescued from people, locations, and situations. I am in desperate need of the grace that is alone able to rescue me from me. I can escape situations and relationships, but I have no power to escape me" (Tripp, New Morning Mercies, March 7).

## **B...Sin's Course (vv. 14b-15a)**

### **Explanation**

Just a simple process of lust, conception (the process of lust and temptation coming together), and finally sin.

## **C...Sin's Conclusion (v. 15b)**

### **Explanation**

Sin, ultimately, always ends in death.

“By death, James means separation from the life that God provides. Because he is talking about believers, James is not referring to eternal separation from God in hell here. But when believers sin, we cut off our access to God and receive discipline from God. This can result in physical death (e.g., Acts 5:1–11); separation from fellowship and being given into Satan’s power (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:1–13); sorrow (e.g., 2 Cor. 7:8–10); reenslavement to sin and powerlessness in the Christian life (e.g., Rom. 6–7); sickness (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:30); shame, spiritual blindness, and rebuke (e.g., Rev. 3:18–19); loss of strength, groaning, and wasting away (e.g., Ps. 32:3–4); and more” (Teach the Text).

## **2...Reflect on the Goodness of God (vv. 16-18)**

### **Explanation**

James exhorts the believers not to be deceived. He follows with a discussion of God's goodness.

Why?

The enemy is a deceiver, and he will work to convince you that God is not good or not working for your good.

“Don’t be deceived. This same phrase appears three other times in the New Testament: 1

Corinthians 6:9; 15:33; and Galatians 6:7. In all three cases a crucial piece of information is unknown or forgotten. Without that knowledge, the reader is in real danger of being deceived. In all three cases that crucial piece of information follows the phrase “Don’t be deceived.” So it is here. The crucial piece of information in the battle to understand and avoid temptation is the truth of 1:17–18: God is the source of good and will never deviate from his stated purpose of bringing us to maturity. If James’s reader grasps this truth, then great progress can be made in understanding and avoiding temptation. After all, the very first deception in human history was Satan’s attempt to get Adam and Eve to doubt the goodness of God (Gen. 3:1)” (Teach the Text).

## **3...Reject the Practice of Anger (vv. 19-20)**

### **Explanation**

Anger, often, but not always, causes or leads to sin.

“Sometimes the Bible presents anger positively or at least neutrally (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Mark 3:1–6; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:26–27). When James speaks of being slow to anger in 1:19, he is speaking about the attitude of anger that fits in this tradition. The Bible also presents anger negatively (e.g., Eccles. 7:9; Matt. 5:22; Eph. 4:31). This is where 1:20 fits. There are two differences between these kinds of anger: (1) Righteous anger is anger patterned after God’s anger toward sin, but God is slow to anger, and those who are angry in this way should be slow

to anger. (2) The anger that the Bible says to get rid of is anger associated with angry outbursts, cursing speech, and violent rage. Notice in Matthew 5:22 that being angry with your brother or sister is paralleled with calling them a fool” (Teach the Text).

“George Stulac writes, “Almost daily as a pastor I see the value that good listening has for the church’s purity within and the church’s mission without. When disagreements occur in the church, over and over I have seen what great damage is done to people, to relationships and to the effectiveness of our ministries when we are quick to argue our positions, defend our views and push our opinions. I have also seen what great good is done when we discipline ourselves to postpone defending our own views and judging others’ views while we concentrate on listening and giving a full hearing in order to understand the other side of the conflict. We usually find the conflict more easily resolved. Good listening is a protection against dissension” (James, p. 66; as cited in Zondervan’s KJV Commentary).

“Dr. Leo Madow, a psychoanalyst at the Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, identified depression as “probably the most common sign of hidden anger in our society. More people get depressed because of repressed or unrecognized anger than almost any other symptom” (Leo Madow, “Why You Get Angry—and What to Do about It,” US News & World Report, April 26, 1982, p. 74; as cited in Zondervan’s KJV Commentary).

## **4...Receive the Transforming Work of the Word (vv. 21-26)**



## **Explanation**

Two thoughts actually spring from this analogy.

The mirror shows me what I am.

The mirror shows me what I should be.

## **5...Refocus your Energy toward Serving and Separating (vv. 27-28)**

### **Application**

Give yourself to the activities that God desires for you.

### **Conclusion**

**Christ Follower:** Develop your God-given defense against temptations to sin.

**Christ Seeker:** Believe in Christ Who saves from all sins.