

Let No Man Say
James 1:13

James 1:13 reads, “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.”

James 1:12-18 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**) promises a sure blessing upon those who are faithful to endure the trials of life through an obedient love to the Lord. Then the remainder of the paragraph presents a serious warning for those who fall away at sinful temptation through the enticement of their own selfish desires. Through this promise of a sure blessing and this presentation of a serious warning, a contrast is provided between our relationship toward the Lord our God and our relationship toward the lusts of our flesh.

Having begun in **verse 12** with a fortifying promise, this paragraph continues in **verse 13** with a forceful prohibition. Grammatically, **verse 13** is a compound sentence. The first independent clause of this compound sentence forcefully presents a prohibition against error -- “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” The second independent clause of this compound sentence, joined to the first by the conjunction “for,” forcefully presents a proclamation of the truth -- “For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”

I. The Prohibition against Error

As we have noted, the opening portion of this verse presents a forceful prohibition against error. Grammatically, this prohibition may be divided into two parts. The first part begins by revealing *the context* for the prohibition -- “Let no man say when he is tempted.” Herein the audience, the activity, and the application of this prohibition are revealed. The audience of this prohibition is revealed through the phrase, “Let no man.” None of us, no, not even one of us, is ever to make the claim that he or she is “tempted of God.” There are no exceptions to this prohibition. Each and every one of us is included therein. No matter who we may be and no matter how severe may be our circumstances, we are absolutely forbidden ever to make the claim that the Lord our God is the source of our temptations to sin, and thus is somehow at fault for our sin. Furthermore, the activity of this prohibition is revealed through the word “say.” The contextual idea of this word is not so much that of speaking this claim to others, but more so that of making this claim to ourselves. It is the idea of rationalizing unto ourselves that the Lord our God is the source of our temptations to sin, and thereby justifying ourselves for yielding to those temptations. Such thinking and rationalizing unto ourselves is absolutely forbidden. Yea, such thinking and rationalizing is actually blasphemy against our all-holy Lord God. Finally, the application of this prohibition is revealed through the phrase, “When he is tempted.” The contextual shift from the noun form of the word, “temptation,” as used in verses 2 & 12, to the verb form of the word, “tempted,” as used in verses 13 & 14, helps to signal that there is a shift in the subject matter from the trying of our faith to the temptation (or, enticement) unto sin. In addition, the closing portion of this verse clearly indicates that being tempted “with evil” is

now the subject matter, saying, “For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” So then, when we are in the midst of sinful temptation, we must never justify yielding to that temptation by rationalizing that the sinful temptation is from the Lord our God. God forbid that we should ever rationalize sinful temptation in such a manner!

The second part of this prohibition against error continues by revealing *the claim* that is prohibited -- “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” Selfish human nature commonly seeks to excuse and justify itself by shifting the blame of its sinful faults away from itself onto another. It is especially perverse when our selfish nature seeks to shift the blame for our sinful faults onto the Lord our God. Yes, God’s Word reveals that the Lord our God brings the trying of our faith into our lives. Furthermore, there is indeed some form of temptation to sin in the midst of every trial. Therefore, the perverted mindset of our sinful flesh may justify and excuse yielding to temptation and sin by claiming that because God brought the trial, He also caused the temptation. However, although the Lord our God brings trials into our lives in order to purify our faith, He never causes sinful temptation in our lives in order to corrupt our faith. In fact, the prohibition of this verse is not simply that we are never to indicate that we are tempted *by* God as the direct agent of our temptations. Rather, the prohibition of this verse is that we are never even to imply that we are tempted *from* God as the distant cause of our temptations through some other means. Adam made such a false implication when he stated that his wife, which *the Lord God Himself had created to be with him*, had tempted him to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 1:13).

Even so, this implication that we are “tempted of God” as a distant cause is rationalized in three ways. First, we might blame our sinful faults upon our personal constitution (that is -- upon our hereditary characteristics, personality type, mental disorders, etc.). Thus we imply that the Lord our God, who created us with this personal constitution, is the cause of our sinful temptations and sinful behavior. Second, we might blame our sinful faults upon our relational contacts (that is -- upon our contact with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, enemies, etc.). Thus we imply that the Lord our God, who arranged these relational contacts, is the cause of our sinful temptations and sinful behavior. Third, we might blame our sinful faults upon our individual circumstances (that is -- upon our living conditions, financial struggles, health needs, peculiar experiences, etc.). Thus we imply that the Lord our God, who placed us into these individual circumstances, is the cause of our sinful temptations and sinful behavior. Yet the forceful prohibition and sharp rebuke of God’s Word goes forth, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.”

II. The Proclamation of the Truth

Having presented a forceful prohibition against error in the opening portion of the verse, James 1:13 then presents a forceful proclamation of the truth in the closing portion. The two independent clauses of this sentence are joined by the conjunction “for,” indicating that this proclamation of the truth is an explanation for the prohibition against error. Grammatically, this proclamation of the truth can be divided into two parts. The first part of this proclamation reveals the truth concerning *the character* of the Lord our God -- “For God cannot be tempted with evil.” By the nature of His character, the Lord our God is lit-

erally untemptable. He is literally incapable of being tempted. By nature the Lord our God is absolutely holy, pure, and righteous. “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). Yea, the Lord our God is “glorious in holiness” (Exodus 15:11). “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). “There is no unrighteousness in Him” (Psalm 92:15). His righteousness “is an everlasting righteousness” (Psalm 119:142). Thus by the nature of His character, the Lord our God despises all sin with absolute disgust and hatred. By nature the Lord our God and wicked sin are completely adverse to one another without any opening for compromise. Wicked sin has no appeal whatsoever to our all-holy Lord God; therefore, temptation to sin can never find a foothold with Him.

The second part of this proclamation reveals the truth concerning *the conduct* of the Lord our God -- “Neither tempteth he any man.” The all-holy, all-righteous character of the Lord our God is the foundation for His conduct. “The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psalm 145:17). Because He is all-holy and all-righteous in the nature of His character, He Himself can never and will never tempt any one at any time in any way unto unrighteousness. To be even the distant cause of sinful temptation in our lives would be directly contrary to His nature. Our all-righteous Lord loves righteousness in our lives (Psalm 11:7). He is of such pure nature and of such pure eyes that He cannot behold evil or look upon sinful iniquity with any favor (Habakkuk 1:13). Therefore, the Lord our God can never and will never promote that unrighteousness in our lives which is a hateful abomination in His sight.

The Lord our God never tempts anyone to sin. Rather, in His all-righteous faithfulness, He will not allow us to be tempted above our ability for victory through faith in Him, “but will with the temptation also make a way to escape” in order that we may be able to bear it in righteousness (1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore, no one should ever claim that he or she is “tempted of God.” In addition, no one should ever blame God in any manner for his or her sinful failure. Yet if the Lord our God is not the cause of our sinful temptation and sinful failure, what is the cause? James 1:14 gives answer, saying, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” Not one of us is tempted unto sin of the Lord our God. Every one of us is tempted unto sin of *his own* lust (selfish desire). Even so, our sinful failure is *never* God’s fault! Rather, our sinful failure is *always* our own fault!