

TEMPTATION: THE BATTLE FROM WITHIN

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INTRODUCTION: (Scripture Reading – James 1:13-18)

- A. It would be nice if once we became a Christian that we were free from the assaults of temptation and sin, but that's simply not the case:
 - 1. When we obey the gospel of Christ we are deciding to be spiritually crucified with Christ and to live for Him, but this commitment is tested by many struggles against sin and temptation
 - 2. It can frustrate and discourage us to know that our sins have been forgiven, only to see ourselves falling to temptation again & defiling our clean record. Some even think it's not worth trying!
- B. While fighting temptation and sin will be a lifelong battle, we can gain strength in our resistance by gaining a better understanding of how temptation & sin work. James describes this (Jas 1:13-18)
- C. Here, we not only see better how sin works, but we get some practical pointers for how to defeat it!

DON'T BE DECEIVED... UNDERSTAND HOW SIN REALLY WORKS FROM WITHIN

- A. Do not be deceived... When you are being tempted and when you fall to sin, do not blame God!
 - 1. James begins his discussion on our battle against sin with a one of the major problems of men... People tend to cast blame on God for their own spiritual failures: (James 1:13)
 - a. I have heard people say things like, "I am sure there is a good reason God is tempting me..." or after they have fallen to sin they say, "God made this happen for a reason"
 - b. James had spoken so much on the positive value of trials and what the testing of our faith can produce that a person might get to thinking that God personally and deliberately sends all of the problems we face our way so we can benefit from them.
 - c. People love to be able to blame someone else for their problems & failures. After all James said about trials coming from God he seems to anticipate people applying the same logic to temptations, so he makes it clear... Temptations are not God's fault!
 - 2. So we have a need draw a distinction in our minds between trials and temptations (vs. 2, 13)
 - a. Both of these are forms of tests that we face as Christians, but trials are intended to build up our faith and temptations are intended to destroy our souls!
 - b. The words "trial" in verse 2 and "temptation" in verse 13 are basically the same Greek word, but it can have multiple meanings. You have to let the context define it.
 - c. It's obvious that two very different things are under consideration – One is a difficult thing but is designed to build us up while the other is difficult and designed to destroy us!
 - d. God has tested His people, like Abraham (Gen 22:12), in the past and He continues to test His people today. Such a test may come from God. In the midst of a "trial" we may be tempted to sin... This temptation does not come from God but somewhere else.
 - 3. Everyone doesn't see this... So when people fall to temptation and sin they tend to play the blame game. This game has been a past-time of mankind from the beginning (Gen 3:12-13)
 - a. Eve blamed the serpent for her sin. Adam took it a step further by blaming Eve and God for his sin. He shifted blame saying, "The woman YOU GAVE me made me do it"
 - b. And people are still casting blame today! Whether it is about homosexuality, alcoholism, immoral living, habitual sins of the tongue... Blame is put on everyone but ourselves!
 - c. People say things like, "I can't help it, I was just born this way!" or "God gave me these desires, it's not my fault" or "It's because of the way I was raised, my environment growing up caused me to be this way" or "If God hadn't put me in this circumstance"
 - d. How many say, "I chose this life" or "I chose to do that action" – Responsibility is lacking!

- e. David consistently shows the right attitude – He recognizes God as the source of salvation and deliverance while he was the one responsible for the sin! **(Psalm 38:18)**
- 4. Instead of blaming God for our spiritual failures, we should recognize that He is consistently the source of every good and perfect gift in our lives **(James 1:17-18)**
 - a. Instead of holding God responsible for our sins, in our personal spiritual battles we must cling to Him recognizing the good God does for us if we want to be victorious!
 - b. God doesn't seek us to become ensnared by sin... In fact the opposite is true! God actively works to secure us a way of escape for every temptation we face! **(1 Cor 10:13)**
 - c. God is not the source of the evil & destructive things in our lives... He gives us what is good & what helps us grow spiritually. Even in our trials, these are ultimately for our good
- 5. If we want to be conquerors in our battles against sin we must start by recognizing the true source of our sins and quit blaming God who works to deliver us from sin! **(James 1:14)**
 - a. Where do our temptations come from? They come from Satan working through our own desires. If we are going to point our finger at anyone, it better not be at the Lord!
 - b. As long as we are casting the blame for our failures outside of ourselves, we are not prepared to face our battles against temptation and be triumphant!
 - c. Blaming others for our failures only works to lower our guard against temptation, weakens our determination to resist it, and causes us to abide in the sin even longer instead of repenting and getting out of it! We can't afford to deceive ourselves in this matter!

B. Some if temptations do not come from God, where do they come from? After telling us not to blame God for our failures, James then describes the real process of sin and how it is a battle from within!

- 1. Sin begins with temptation as we are drawn away by our own desires **(James 1:14-15)**
 - a. The source of our temptation, our being drawn away, & our being enticed is our own desires... When it comes to our sins we could say we are our own worst enemy!
 - b. **Illustration:** A mousetrap... The main difference is that we provide the cheese Satan uses to bait us! Like a mouse going to a mousetrap surrounded by the carcasses of his friends. You know, Satan makes sure that there's always free cheese in a mousetrap!
 - c. James uses terms familiar to hunters and fishermen – Drawn away and enticed:
 - 1) Drawn away – Lured like an animal is lured out of its safety of cover into an area filled with traps... Perhaps it catches the smell of the scent of an animal of the opposite sex, or hears its grunt & antlers rattling. It walks unknowingly out of its safety and right into a trap or into the line of a hunter's rifle scope!
 - 2) Enticed – Like a fish is enticed with bait. It is something flashy, makes an attractive noise, or looks tasty. The fish may not even be hungry but seeing the bait dangled in its face, its desires are awakened, it takes the bait, & it's caught!
 - 3) This is similar to Solomon's warning to his son about the evil influence of his sinful friends. They were laying a snare to trap an innocent person, but they didn't realize that the only one they were going to trap was themselves **(Pr 1:17-19)**
 - d. In Christ we are to no longer fulfill the passions & desires of our flesh **(Eph 2:3)** → The passions & desires are given to us by God, He has given them to us for our good, and has given us a right avenue to exercise them. Sin is when we fulfill them wrongly!
 - e. The place where we must stop sin is in the heart! We cannot expect to resist the devil as long as we're handing him the ammo... Cut it off at the level of the desire! Satan knows our weakness so we better know them too! **(Matt 5:28; Prov 4:23-27)**

2. Then at some point desire conceives and gives birth to sin (**James 1:16; Matthew 4:1-11**)
 - a. It's like the words to the song we sing: "Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin"
 - b. Temptation itself isn't necessary sinful, sin comes when we yield to the temptation. Using pregnancy terms, our desire is the vehicle through which sin is born into existence
 - c. We see this when Satan came to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus certainly resisted each of the temptations Satan presented, but why did Satan choose the temptations he did? Bread after He fasted, His trust in His Father's deliverance, and a way around the cross. The "desires" Satan tried to work the temptations through were not sinful
 - d. It's when we act on the desire that sin is born – Whether it is some action that we take, a word spoken, or a thought entertained... We take the bait and indulge in the sin.
3. Then sin, when it has become full grown, brings forth death (**James 1:15**)
 - a. The process James describes for sin stands in direct contrast to the process of trials... Trials met with faith produces patience and perfection. Temptations met with our desires produces sin and death (**Compare to James 1:2,4**)
 - b. Ultimately we think of the death sin brings as being the eternal death we would suffer in Hell... But even in this life sin brings spiritual death as sin separates us from our fellowship with God... And sin brings death in the calamity that often accompanies it.
 - c. If we would only concentrate on the consequences of our actions, it'd be much easier to say no the temptation to sin (**Illust: Person trying to lose weight resisting junk food**)
4. One of the most important things we can do in our battle against sin is to be open and honest with ourselves (**James 1:16**)
 - a. Do you want to keep losing the temptation battle? Keep deceiving yourself, keep shifting the blame to other people, keep on filling your heart & mind with the garbage of this world, keep associating regularly with sinful people, cut back on the amount of time you spend doing spiritual activity, and make decisions based just on worldly concerns
 - b. Our greatest problem is that we deceive ourselves... We rationalize our sins with the logic of worldly people, we minimize our sins as being not as bad as other sins, and we put ourselves willingly in compromising circumstances thinking we can still resist sin
 - c. You know the desires through which Satan brings temptations most effectively against you. Don't give yourself an opportunity for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (**Rom 13:14**)