

The Truth Concerning Temptation # 6

James 1: 13-16

Our text this evening deals with a challenge that each of us has faced at various times throughout our lives. This challenge comes in many forms and in varied degrees of intensity, but it is present in all human life. Some are more susceptible to this challenge than others, but all are forced to deal with it from time to time.

We are dealing with the challenge of temptation. As best I can discern, it was the first tactic used of Satan in his devious attempt to contaminate spiritual purity in God's grandest creation: humanity. As Satan approached Eve in the Garden of Eden, he tempted her to question the authority and accuracy of God's Word: *Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* After Eve's affirmation of God's Word and the certainty of punishment for rebellion, Satan responded: *Ye shall not surely die.* He began by tempting her to look at life through eyes of flesh rather than eyes of obedience to God. We know the rest of the story. Eve submitted to the temptation, along with her husband Adam, and thus began the curse of sin upon humanity.

One has to look no further than the account of the fall of man to see the dangers associated with temptation and the ruin that follows succumbing to its desires. We all face it, but we do not have to give in to temptation and reap the consequences it brings. (While I am here, let me say that facing temptation is not a sin; giving in to temptation and indulging the flesh is where sin enters the picture. You have been tempted, and you will continue to be tempted. The enemy will see to that, but we don't have to give in to those temptations.)

Let's take a few moments to consider the [realities](#) presented in the text concerning this difficult challenge as we think on: [The Truth Concerning Temptation](#).

I. The Principle in Temptation (13-14) – *In the first twelve verses, when James speaks of the temptations of life, it is with the significance of trials, the outward circumstances of life. There is a shift in [V.13](#) in the meaning of the word. Note that in this verse he does not use the noun anymore, but the verb, which indicates the inner solicitation to evil, the subjective impulse to sin.ⁱ Keeping that in mind, let's look at this principle in detail. Notice:*

A. The Caution in the Text (13a) – *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God:* We have established that temptation deals with the inner solicitation to sin, the impulse within our sinful nature to indulge the flesh. James admonishes the hearer to rightly understand and appropriate temptation. Our temptation is never of God. He sends trials to test us, but He never tempts us to sin.

- We cannot dismiss the sovereignty of God in our lives. He is God and He maintains absolute control of our lives. We will face nothing that God does not allow. He may allow us to face temptation, but you can be assured that God would never, under any circumstance, encourage us to give in to anything that is contrary to His holy and righteous nature. Someone has said, "*God may test you to strengthen your faith, but He never tempts you to subvert your faith.*"ⁱⁱ

B. The Certainty in the Text (13b) – *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 reveals an absolute certainty regarding God. He speaks of:

1. God's Character – *for God cannot be tempted with evil.* Really when we think of it, that ought to make perfect sense to us. Temptation is a solicitation to sin. God is the very essence of holiness, absolute righteousness. There is no measure of sin or iniquity in Him. His very nature would not allow temptation.

- Now you might argue that Jesus was tempted of Satan 40 days in the wilderness and you are right. In fact He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. *Mat.4:1 – Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.* His humanity would face the temptation, but His deity could not have been tempted. We must remember that Jesus lived a Spirit filled life, living the life we never could. He overcame every temptation Satan offered.

2. God's Consistency – *for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:* God has never tempted any man to behave contrary to His divine nature or to indulge in sin. As we have discussed, God may allow us to face temptation, but He will never tempt us to sin. Some seek a skewed form of justification in sin by claiming that they are not responsible for their actions since God is sovereign in our lives. God may allow it, but we are also promised a means of escape when temptation comes. He will never allow temptation without a way to escape it. *1 Cor.10:13 – There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* God will not force you through the door of escape, but it will always be there!

C. The Confirmation in the Text (14) – *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* This reveals an alarming truth that we had rather not consider. Often we give Satan more credit than he deserves. Yes he has presented the temptation unto us, but often we are too quick to take the bait. Ultimately we are tempted because of the lusts within the flesh. Often we think of immorality when we think of lust, but it includes a host of iniquity: pride, jealousy, bitterness, greed, etc... We must learn to seek the escape and flee the lusts of the flesh!

I. The Principle in Temptation (13-14)

II. The Progression of Temptation (14-15) – Here we discover the downward progression of temptation. It originates with lust and culminates with death. First we discover:

A. It Originates with Desire (14) – *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* Temptation begins when we are drawn away of our own lust. We face that inner desire to behave contrary to God’s righteous standard for our lives. The lust within draws us toward sin. Often we think of lust as primarily a bodily or physical appetite, but this goes much deeper than that. It literally has the idea of “*that which pertains to the soul which moves the body toward the desire; to long for, covet, and desire.*” We must understand that our behaviors of the flesh originate within the mind and heart. We simply act on that which comes from within.

B. It Manipulates through Deception (14) – *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* Keep in mind we are dealing with a downward progression away from righteousness into sin. Once we begin to lust after sin, we are *enticed* to sin. This means “*to allure, entice, deceive, literally to bait.*” Isn’t that exactly how the enemy operates? He works through deception. Our sinful nature seeks to satisfy the fleshly desires we have. Satan sets the trap with appealing bait, and before we know it, we are caught in the trap of sin.

- Sadly we can’t see that when we are consumed with desire. Our eyes are blinded to the devastation sin brings to our lives. And that is just the way Satan desires it. He will never reveal the end result of sin. We know that sin always has consequences, and yet many times we take the bait and indulge our sinful lusts.

C. It Contaminates through Decay (15a) – *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin:* Here we find an interesting and familiar concept. When lust conceives, it brings forth sin. This paints a natural picture that all can understand. Lust is conceived in the womb of desire and results in sin.

- We know that conception requires two people coming together, resulting in the birth of a child. The conception of lust that gives birth to sin is no different. We are drawn to the baited trap of Satan by our own lust, and as we contemplate the pleasure available, we begin to reason with the enemy. We literally begin to work together with Satan in a devious effort to satisfy our lust. The result of that collaboration produces sin. Sin always results in decay and death.

- James is speaking to believers, but we must remember that none are above sin. If we aren't very careful, we will intentionally work with the enemy to create sin in our lives. Unfortunately sin is a part of our lives, but we must not relish in it or willfully seek it out. It has been said, "*He that falls into sin is a man; he that grieves at sin is a saint; he that boasts of sin is a devil.*"ⁱⁱⁱ

D. It Culminates in Death (15b) – *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Here we are reminded of the deadly nature of sin. Let's take a moment to consider this in its context. Lust has conceived and brought forth sin. Sin brings forth death. Take a moment to remember or imagine the excitement surrounding the birth of a child. The parents anxiously await that day with great anticipation. The birth of a child is one of the most joyous occasions in the life of a family. But with sin the delivery is horrid. Rather than celebration there is mourning. Rather than the birth of something wonderful and lively, it is dreadful and lifeless. The pleasure of sin will not produce the desired result. Rather than life, it will end in death.

- We must keep in mind the audience to whom James was writing. He is writing to the believer. This does not speak of eternal death for a Christian who commits sin, although there is application for those who live life indulging in sin, never coming to saving faith in Christ. Sin will result in eternal death for the unsaved. However, there must be application for the believer as well. We can rest assured that sin will cause death in regard to our fellowship with the Lord. It will create separation between you and the communion you desire with God. I also believe that this can refer to physical death. Much of the sinful lifestyle today is hazardous to our health. God is holy and will not condone sin. If a believer continues in unrepentant sin willfully, I firmly believe that God may take them home rather than allow them to be a reproach to Him and the church. Whatever the case may be, the end result of sin is death, and it is dreadful.

I. The Principle in Temptation (13-14)

II. The Progression of Temptation (14-15)

III. The Priority in Temptation (16) – *Do not err, my beloved brethren.* James does not leave us without a course of action regarding temptation. He emphasizes two priorities to overcome. First:

A. A Proper Relationship – He reminds them of their position in Christ and the fact that they are loved of the church. I can think of no better way to avoid temptation than keeping a close relationship with the Lord and fellow believers. When we walk with the Lord, setting our affection

upon Him, we are less likely to desire the lusts of the flesh. Surrounding ourselves with those of like faith will provide strength when difficulty arises and prevent our exposure to compromising situations. Stay close to Christ and in fellowship with the church!

B. A Persistent Resolve – [Do not err, my beloved brethren](#). James simply urges them to refrain from erring in the faith. That is easier said than done, but we ought to seek the ways of God instead of the pleasures of the flesh. This will require commitment and resolve. The flesh is strong and it is easy to succumb to its desires. Again consider: [1 Cor.10:13 – There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.](#) God is always faithful to provide a way of escape, but it is up to us to seek that door and pass through it. We must be willing to admit that we are responsible for our sin. Until we are willing to recognize the severe possibilities of temptation and avoid sin at all costs, we will continue to fall into sin.

Facing temptation does not constitute sin, but our response to it will determine its progression. When temptation comes we need to “nip it in the bud.” Flee the lusts of the flesh and run to Christ. Seek His guidance and strength to overcome.

Maybe you are dealing with temptation at this time in your life. Maybe you have taken the bait and indulged the lusts of the flesh. God is never pleased with sin, but He is willing to offer forgiveness. If there is unconfessed sin in your life, I urge you to bring that to the Lord. If you have never trusted Christ as your Savior, remember that He alone can save from sin, and that sin, when it is finished, will bring forth death. Why not come to Him in salvation?

ⁱ Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James

ⁱⁱ Expository Pulpit Series - The Expository Pulpit Series – James: Faith in Action

ⁱⁱⁱ Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James