

James Chapter 1 Continued

Verses 13-15

The temptation (of verses 13-15), differs from that (in verses 2-12), as the context shows.

Here the source is identified as internal, from one's own "lust", and the outcome is "death".

In verses 2-12, the "temptations" or trials have an external origin in that they fall on man.

The trials of verses 2-12, cannot be avoided, so believers are encouraged to endure them, and mature as a result.

The temptations of verses 13-15, must be avoided, according to God's express commandments analogy in the physical life cycle: conception, birth, maturity and death.

James uses the words with the same Greek root in verses 2-12 and 13-15, to express some different concepts.

Outwardly, trials and temptations may appear the same, and what may start as a trial may develop into temptation, if not properly answered by the Word of God.

James 1:13 "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:"

The same Greek word translated "trials" (verses 2-12), is also translated "tempted" here.

James' point is that every difficult circumstance that enters a believer's life can either strengthen him if he obeys God and remains confident in His care, or become a solicitation to evil if the believer chooses instead to doubt God and disobey His Word.

"God cannot be tempted":

God by; His holy nature has no capacity for evil or vulnerability to it (Hab. 1:13; Lev. 19:2; Isa 6:3; 1 Peter 1:16).

"Neither tempteth he any man":

God purposes trials to occur and in them He allows temptation to happen, but He has promised not to allow more than believers can endure and never without a way to escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

They choose whether to take the escape God provides or to give in (2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1).

We had been discussing in the last lesson the tribulations and temptations of man.

Temptations come to make us strong in the Lord.

God allows the devil to tempt us.

He does not bring the temptation Himself.

It is actually the lust of the flesh which tempts mankind.

We discovered in the last lesson that to withstand temptation of the flesh from the devil, brings us a crown of life.

Not only does it bring us a crown of life, but it makes us stronger with each temptation that we can overcome.

James 1:14 "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

“Drawn or carried away”:

The Greek word was used to describe wild game being lured into traps.

Just as animals can be drawn to their deaths by attractive baits, temptation promises people something good, which is actually harmful.

“Enticed”:

A fishing term that means “to capture” or “to catch with bait” (2 Peter 2:14, 18).

It is parallel to “carried away”.

“His own lust”:

This refers to the strong desire of the human soul to enjoy or acquire something that will fulfill the flesh.

Man’s fallen nature has the propensity to strongly desire whatever sin will satisfy it.

“His own”:

This describes the individual nature of lust, it is different for each person as a result of inherited tendencies, environment, upbringing, and personal choices.

The Greek grammar also indicates that the “lust” is the direct agent or cause of one’s sinning (Matthew 15:18-20).

We know this to be true, with the example of Adam and Eve.

The first mistake she made was to listen to that old deceiver Satan.

Then she looked upon that which was forbidden.

The lust of mankind has always been the thing that causes man to sin.

We have said it over and over in these lessons.

We must get our flesh under the control of the spirit to avoid sin in our life.

The temptation is sometimes very great, but our will to do God's will must be greater than the temptation itself.

It is not a sin to be tempted.

It is a sin to fall to the temptation.

James 1:15 "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Sin is not merely a spontaneous act, but the result of a process.

The Greek words for "hath conceived" and "bringeth forth sin" liken the process to physical conception and birth.

Thus, James personifies temptation and shows that it can follow a similar sequence and produce sin with all its deadly results.

While sin does not result in spiritual death for the believer, it can lead to physical death (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

The wages of sin is death.

The only reason Christians do not have to pay those wages, is because Jesus paid it for us.

"Conceived":

In the verse above, means catch, help, or take.

Then when lust has taken control, the person sins.

We must get the flesh under control.

Paul spoke of even whipping his body into line daily.

This probably did not mean a physical whipping, but a taming of his flesh.

The flesh of man is sinful.

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23).

We must receive forgiveness for our sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and then go and sin no more.

James 1:16 "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

“Do not err”:

The Greek expression refers to erring, going astray, or wandering.

Christians are not to make the mistake of blaming God rather than themselves for their sin.

This is just saying, walk in the salvation you have received.

James 1:17 "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."

“Every good ... perfect gift is from above”:

The two different Greek words for “gift” emphasize the perfection and inclusiveness of God’s Holy graciousness.

The first denotes the act of giving and the second is the object given.

Everything related to divine giving is adequate, complete and beneficial.

“Father of lights”:

An ancient Jewish expression for God as the Creator, with “light” referring to the sun, moon and stars (Gen. 1:14-19).

“No variableness, neither shadow of turning”:

From man’s perspective, the celestial bodies have different phases of movement and rotation, change from day to night and vary in intensity and shadow.

But God does not follow that pattern as He is changeless (Mal. 3:6; 1 John 1:5).

Three great principles are presented:

- (1) God is the Father, or Creator, of the heavenly bodies;
- (2) As their Creator, He is certainly more stable than they. With God, there is not even the slightest change, He is immutable;

(3) God is only good, and always good.

This third principle relates (verse 17), to the proceeding context.

It answers the implication (of verse 13), that God may sometimes tempt man to evil.

Though God tries the saints (John 6:6; Heb. 11:17), He never tries with evil intent to tempt them.

Immutability of God: Since all changes are either for the better or for the worse, God is unchanging because He is perfect and cannot get better nor become worse.

The Scriptures describe God's nature, will and character as immutable or unchanging.

To be immutable, does not mean to be immobile.

God also has the qualities of personality and can act, think, create, and make decisions.

God is unchanging.

Therefore, Christians can depend on His love and power, because God has not changed since biblical times.

God is the same, today, yesterday, and forever.

God does not change.

God is the source of all Light.

Jesus called Himself the Light of the world.

The Light is so bright there is no shadow where God is.

Ephesians 4:8 "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

These gifts that Jesus gave the believers are spiritual gifts.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 11:29 "For the gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance."

Romans 12:6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith;"

Romans 12:7-8 "Or ministry, [let us wait] on [our] ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;" "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

James 1:18 "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

“Of his own will”:

This phrase translates a Greek word that makes the point that regeneration is not just a wish, but an active expression of God’s will, which He always has the power to accomplish.

This phrase occurs at the beginning of the Greek sentence, which means James intends to emphasize that the sovereign will of God is the source of this new life.

“Begot he us”:

The divine act of regeneration, or the new birth.

“Word of truth”:

Scripture, or the Word of God.

He regenerates sinners through the power of that Word (2. Cor. 6:7; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

“Firstfruits”:

Originally an Old Testament expression referring to the first and best harvest crops, which God expected as an offering (Exodus 23:19; Lev. 23:9-14; Deut. 26:1-19).

Giving God that initial crop was an act of faith that He would fulfill His promise of a full harvest to come.

In the same way, Christians are the first evidence of God’s new creation that is to come (2 Peter 3:10-13), and enjoy presently in their new life a foretaste of future glory.

All the redeemed are God’s firstfruits in that they are the first step in God’s redemption of all creation (Romans 8:18-23).

In the first chapter of John, we read that the Word was God.

We also read, that all things that were made were made, by that same Word.

On the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit fell on the 120 Christians, they became first-fruit offerings to the Lord.

Ephesians 1:13-14 "In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

We see in the verse following that those who follow the Lamb (Jesus Christ), are spoken of as firstfruits.

Revelation 14:4 "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, [being] the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

James 1:19 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"

"Swift to hear, slow to speak":

Believers are to respond positively to Scripture, and eagerly pursue every opportunity to know God's Word and will better.

But at the same time, they should be cautious about becoming a preacher or teacher too quickly.

This is a key verse because it expresses three topics that James develops later: hearing (verses 19-27); speaking (3:1-12), and wrath (4:1-12).

In view of the things he has already mentioned, James says, listen and don't talk too much.

Usually if we listen carefully to what someone is saying, before we speak, we will not get angry.

It is just a misunderstanding that causes wrath.

Let the other person explain, so you can avoid problems.

We are cautioned in Proverbs to listen and not talk so much.

It even says, if you listen more than you talk, they will believe you are smart, whether you actually are or not.

James 1:20 "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

"Wrath":

From the Greek word that describes a deep, internal resentment and rejection, in this context, of God's Word (Gal. 4:16).

Trials require silence and patience because talk inflames anger, and anger inflames talk.

Anger also distracts from listening to God.

Jesus was slow to anger.

In fact, He was a very patient person.

If we are to be like our Leader, Jesus Christ, then we must be of a quiet nature as well.

The Bible calls it longsuffering.

James 1:21 "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

“Lay apart”:

Having put off, as one would do with dirty clothes.

The tense of this Greek verb stresses the importance of putting off sin prior to receiving God’s Holy Word.

“Filthiness ... naughtiness”:

The first term was used of moral vice as well as dirty garments.

Sometimes it was even used of ear wax, here of sin that would impede the believer’s spiritual hearing.

“Filthiness” here refers to evil desire or intent.

“Engrafted word”:

This might better be translated “implanted word” and may reflect Christ’s parable of the seed planted in the four different soils (Matt. 13:3-9).

Both Christ and James focus on the proper hearing of God’s Word (Matt. 13:13, 19, 20, 22, 23).

One needs to hear that Word, for it is “able to save your souls”.

Though this phrase accurately describes the Word’s ability to preserve and mature the Christians’ life through trials.

"Superfluity":

This in the verse above, means abundance.

To lay aside the naughtiness in our life, would be to crucify this old man of flesh and let our spirit rule over the flesh.

It is the Word of God (Jesus Christ), who saves our soul.

This is speaking of being so full of Jesus and His Word (Bible), that we will have His Word implanted in our inner-most being.

Our heart will be stayed upon God and His Word, and that will cause us to live the way that we should live.

James 1:22 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

“But be ye doers”:

The fact that James calls professing believers to be “doers,” rather than simply to do, emphasizes that their entire personality should be characterized in that way.

“Deceiving”:

Literally “reason beside or alongside” (as in beside oneself).

This word was used in mathematics to refer to a miscalculation.

Professing Christians who are content with only hearing the Word, have made a very serious spiritual miscalculation.

Even the scribes and Pharisees were hearers of the Word of God.

The devil spirits even heard and believed, but they were not doers.

James 2:19 "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

They believe, but they decided to follow Lucifer instead of God.

We may say we are Christians, but the real test is, do we live what we profess?

Are we just saying and not doing?

James 1:23 "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:"

“Beholding”:

A forceful Greek word meaning to observe carefully and cautiously, as opposed to taking a causal glance.

“Glass”:

First century mirrors were not glass but metallic, made of bronze, silver or for the wealthy, gold.

The metals were beaten flat and polished to a high gloss, and the image they reflected was adequate but not perfect (1 Cor. 13:12).

James 1:24 "For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

“Forgetteth what manner of man he was”:

Unless professing Christians act promptly after they hear the Word, they will forget the changes and improvements that their reflection showed them they need to make.

This really is speaking of someone who professes Christianity, but lives like the world.

This is like people who get baptized and then go back to their old way of life.

When we repent and are saved, and baptized, we become a brand new creature.

Old desires to sin should be gone.

We are not the image we were before we are in Christ.

What manner of man are you?

Are you Christ-like, or worldly?

James 1:25 "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."

“Perfect law”:

In both the Old Testament and New Testament, God’s revealed, inerrant, sufficient and comprehensive Word is called “law” (Psalm 19:7).

The presence of His grace does not mean there is no moral law or code of conduct for believers to obey.

Believers are enabled by the Spirit to keep it.

“Liberty”:

Genuine freedom from sin.

As the Holy Spirit applies the principles of Scripture to believer's hearts, they are freed from sin's bondage and enabled to obey God (John 8:34-36).

It is a law of liberty because it frees from the principles of sin and death (Romans 8:2-3; Galatians 5:1, 13).

James also describes it as the royal law (2:8), for it is the law of the messianic King (Gal. 6:2).

Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

The key word is continueth.

He not only professes Christianity, but walks continuously in the salvation he has received.

No one has to ask him if he is a Christian.

His way of life shows the world that he is a Christian.

Everything we do should be done as unto the Lord.

We are to work the work of an evangelist, until the Lord comes back.

Even minutes before His return, we should be trying to win one more soul to Christianity.

Verses 26-27

In (verses 22-25), James has rebuked mere listening, by the hearer who does not do.

In (verses 26 and 27), he rebukes mere doing, by the doer who leaves his inner life unchanged.

James offers not a formal definition but three key aspects of pure religion: controlled speech, altruistic service, and separation from the world.

James 1:26 "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."

“Religious”:

This refers to ceremonial public worship (Acts 26:5).

James chose this term, instead of one referring to internal godliness, to emphasize the external trappings, rituals, routines and forms that were not followed sincerely.

“Bridleth not his tongue”:

“Bridle means “control,” or as another translation renders it, “keep a tight rein”.

Purity of heart is often revealed by controlled and proper speech.

This is speaking of someone who is a Christian in form only.

The world may even look on him and think of him as a Christian, but unfortunately his heart is not right with God.

We have discussed before, that the words that come out of the mouth, spoken by the tongue, are what we are inside.

Out of the heart, the mouth speaketh.

You cannot curse and bless with the same tongue.

Evil words come from an evil heart.

The heart of man reveals what relationship he has with God.

Religion is something we do systematically.

We can be religious about most anything.

To be a true Christian, our heart must be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

We must speak healing, peaceful words from a heart stayed upon God.

James 1:27 "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."

Pure religion and undefiled”:

James picks two synonymous adjectives to define the most spotless kind of religious faith, that which is measured by compassionate love (John 13:35).

“Fatherless and widows”:

Those without parents or husbands were and are an especially needy segment of the church.

Since they are usually unable to reciprocate in any way, caring for them clearly demonstrates true, sacrificial, Christian love.

“World”:

This is describing the evil world system.

The two things Jesus said were the important commandments were to love God above all else, and to love our neighbor as our self.

You cannot be involved in the ways of the world and belong to God.

Christians are in the world, but are not of the world.

We must not get involved with the world.

We are to be a separated people.

The neighbors that we are most responsible for are the neighbors that cannot help themselves.

The widows and orphans are the responsibility of the Christians.

Keep yourself stayed upon good things, and you will not have time to get involved with the bad.

When you do for those who cannot help themselves, you are doing it unto God.

James Chapter 1 Continued Questions

1. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of ____.
2. What do tribulations come for?
3. Who, or what, actually tempts us?
4. What brings us a crown of life?
5. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own ____.
6. What was Eve's first mistake?
7. How can we avoid sin in our life?
8. Sin bringeth forth ____.
9. Why do the Christians not have to die for their sins?
10. What is 1:16 really saying?
11. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from _____, and cometh down from the _____ of _____.

12. What is the gift of God?
13. The gifts and calling of God are without _____.
14. What are some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in Romans 12?
15. Who are the firstfruits of His creatures?
16. Who made all things?
17. What is the earnest of the inheritance?
18. Let every man be _____ to hear, _____ to speak, _____ to wrath.
19. What can usually stop an argument, before it gets started?
20. If we are to be like Jesus, what should our nature be like?
21. What does "superfluity" mean?
22. What does "engrafted" mean?
23. What is the Word?
24. Be ye _____ of the Word, and not a _____ only.
25. Jesus said, if you love me you will _____ my commandments.
26. What shows the world that you are a Christian without you telling them?
27. Describe pure religion, undefiled before God and the Father.