

Temptation/Steadfastness

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James 1:9-18

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Big Idea: God is our hope in temptation.

INTRODUCTION

- I'm pumped to be in the third week in our series through James. It has been good for my soul to be in this book which fed me so much in college when Jesus was changing my life so radically. It was during that time I was reading our text for today and began to see how I had given into temptation so much in high school. I wasn't prepared. I didn't see the truth and was like James describes, "Lured and enticed by my own desires."
- As I began to see the nature of temptation I found a new strength to endure and remain steadfast. Now, I'd love to tell you I left sin behind but temptation is not something you graduate past. You can get victory and grow but the battle is not over in this world.
- James is trying to prepare us for understanding and remaining steadfast in the face of temptation. Our BIG IDEA: God is our hope in temptation.

1. The root temptation (v.9-11)

- James begins to build out this concept of temptation by helping us to see the root temptation that we face.
- vv.9-11 *"Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits."*
- Temptation: Trust God or trust money. It is trusting God or trusting man. It is trusting God and his power or mankind and our power. And don't be fooled. Every temptation has this at its root.
- Jesus said in Luke 16:13 *No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*
- Money represents the greatest temptation to trusting in God because money represents all this world can offer. Money can bring a sense of security, a sense of hope, and can allow a person to live a self-absorbed life.
- The poor man is not tempted in the same way. James says, the poor person should boast in his or her exaltation! WHY? They aren't tempted to trust in their wealth which is fading away. So, if you are struggling to make ends meet right now and sitting on a boat load of college debt, congratulations! Jesus says you should be totally pumped about your high position!
- Seriously, how many of us would thank God for our lack of resources? James is not simply using lowliness as an analogy. If you don't have a lot of resources James is saying you are in a better position to trust God for EVERYTHING and therefore are in a better position than the rich person.
- James makes a graphic point here about the rich man that I don't want to miss before we move on. It is not simply the man's wealth that is passing away but the man himself. V.10 – like the flowering grass he will pass away. How long do wild flowers last? A few days? Maybe a week or two? Then you can hardly remember they were there. In v.11 James takes it a little further and says the rich man will fade away in the midst of his pursuits. HIS pursuits. He acts as if life is about him and money enables him to fool himself into living that way. He literally loses himself in his self-

centered way of living and his money is his morphine, lulling him into thinking everything is great, all the while killing him.

- So James first bit of wisdom for us is to see the root temptation we all face – trusting God or trusting money. Money represents a substitute for God. You can easily substitute your achievements or your intelligence or your giftedness. The whole point is that it is trusting YOU and what you have or what you can do.
- Paul warns us that some have wandered away from the faith because of wealth. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*
- Some translations just say “the love of money is the root of all evil” because the Greek suggests that it can be read that way. How sobering is that in terms of our text for today?
- How do you know if you are trusting your wealth? Do you feel like God is the one who gave you 100% of what you have? Do you prioritize spending money the way you think God would have you? Do you find yourself naturally generous because Jesus has been generous to you? Do you see extra money as an opportunity to be generous or just increase your lifestyle? If you have some money are you aware of your wealth being a serious temptation for you?
- We have seen the ROOT temptation.

2. The opportunity in temptation (v.12)

- v.12 *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”*
- James doesn’t say, *if* he has stood the test. We said back in verse 2, James says, “Count it pure joy *when* you go through trials ...” James teaches, the Bible teaches, that Christians are going to suffer.
- The truth is, any one of us can receive a phone call as soon as we leave this place telling us a loved one has died in car accident. Any one of us can get a debilitating disease or lose our job. And at one point or other, trials happen to us all. We talked about that last week but what James is helping picture for us here it he opportunity that comes with the trials we face in life.
- There is an opportunity to remain steadfast and endure the test and mature you on toward the crown of life God has promised to give. Back in 1:3-4 [3] *for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*
- One of the problems with most of us is that we view trials as horrible events to be avoided or escaped. And I realize some trials can be excruciating, especially in the moment but what makes the difference in the follower of Christ is that they COME TO SEE the trial as an opportunity for their faith to be grown. Just like a runner sees their first marathon not as suffering but as a test.
- What if we saw EVERY trial as an opportunity and knew that God was with us in it? Ultimately, the Christian doesn’t endure by sheer will or determination. They endure by looking to Jesus who endured the cross for them. He remained steadfast under trial so we can too. Every trial you face this week or this month or this year is an opportunity. An opportunity to be faithful to Jesus and demonstrate that you love God more than you love anything in this world.
- At the end of v.12 James says God gives the crown of life to *“Those who love him.”* Jesus said the greatest commandment is love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength.
- When you feel your faith being tested at work, in a relationship, with your money, or in some other way, you are facing an opportunity to grow in your love for God.

- We have seen the ROOT temptation and the opportunity in each temptation.

3. The nature of temptation (v.13-15)

- Notice that James says "When" he is tempted. You cannot escape temptation. Even some of the most self-denying monks in history could not escape the temptation brought by battles in their own mind.
- Since we can't escape temptation, people make a ton of excuses for their sin: Excuses include (1) it's the other person's fault; (2) I couldn't help it; (3) everybody's doing it; (4) it was just a mistake; (5) nobody's perfect; (6) the devil made me do it; (7) I was pressured into it; (8) I didn't know it was wrong; (9) God is tempting me. A person who makes excuses is trying to shift the blame from himself or herself to something or someone else.
- James doesn't let us get away with that. Vv.13 *"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*
- God does test us, just like he tested Abraham. God arranges external circumstances that will give you the opportunity to walk by faith in him. Temptation is INTERNAL and is when we face circumstances and our sinful nature speaks up. God is responsible for tests we face but we are responsible for temptations.
- vv.14-15 *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*
- James pictures man's "evil desire," first, as attracting his attention and persuading him to approach the forbidden thing and, second, as luring him by means of bait to yield to the temptation. Robertson entitles this verse *"Snared by One's Own Bait"*
- 2 Pictures here James is drawing out for us (hunting and fishing)
 - 1) "lured" - as animals are enticed from a safe covert place into a place full of snares.
 - 2) "enticed" - Fishing term - bait the hook, enticed by the bait, take the bait and you are hooked. I grew up on the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. There were times we would put worms or squid or shrimp on a line and it would absolutely stink. Not once was I tempted but my dad, who is in the 11am today, grew up fishing the same rivers and knew that the fish couldn't resist it. Once they started nibbling at it, it was just a matter of time before they tried to swallow it and you could set your hook.
- How often are we carried away and enticed like a fish is by bait? The thing that proves how dangerous this really is for us is that WE KNOW how we are tempted. How many of you KNOW what your primary temptations will be this week? Yet, they were the same as last and the week before.
- I remember catching the same fish twice on the same day. I had hooked it through its mouth and I threw it back because it was too small to keep. A little while later I caught him again and could see where the first hook was. I look at that and think "what a stupid fish" but then I remember I fall for the same bait all the time. And we all fall for common bait.
- "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man..."* 1 Cor 10:13
- Look at the person to your right – they are a tempted person. Look at the person to your left – they are tempted too. We are ALL tempted. Not all in the same ways.
- But one of the lies that Satan feeds us is that our temptation is completely different. We aren't and the church needs to be a safe place to confess our temptations. Our CG's are the best place for that to happen. You may not find that others struggle exactly like you but we all struggle with temptation. One way to avoid being carried away and enticed by your temptation is if someone else is helping you fight that temptation.

- So we've seen the root temptation, the opportunity in temptation, the nature of temptation and lastly,

4. The hope in temptation (v.16-18)

- v.16 is James grabbing our attention... *"Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers."* He's saying, "Hey, I

love you guys and you need to know the truth here! Listen up!!!!” He just told us that in temptation desire is conceived and brings forth sin which leads to death. This is SERIOUS!!! And the only way to overcome it is TRUTH.

- Did you know that every temptation is built around a lie and every sin is believing a lie? Temptation tells you that whatever sin is offering you will ultimately be more satisfying than what God has to offer. When you ponder it long enough, our depraved minds will begin to deceive us into believing that lie and then we take the giant step into sin. I heard John Piper call sin “Judas joys” - we trade God for a bag of money or whatever we deem more valuable than Him.
- So the remedy to the lies of sin is believing the truth! What truths does James tell us to believe?

•God is Good

- v.17 *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”*
- When you are tempted your flesh is trying to get you to doubt God is good. You are tempted to doubt that what you are experiencing God’s plan for you.
- Self-talk when tempted is HUGE. You begin to tell yourself, “God isn’t good. Why would he withhold this from me? If he were good he would give this to me.”
- ILL – I remember a woman who attended CoaH early on and was in my CG. She has been gone from CoaH for years but I remember her situation well. She was dating a non-Christian guy, she liked him a lot and things had been physical for a while. She knew that it was wrong but she couldn’t seem to break up and stay away from the guy. What she ultimately needed was her CG to walk with her, which we did. We reminded her that God is good and he wants her to trust him. She did and made the firm break. She trusted in God’s goodness. It was several years later, God provided her a good Christian man to marry.
- You need people reminding you that God is good and only has good things for you. There is no variation. He doesn’t change. We ALL change but he doesn’t, so we can trust his consistent goodness.

•God is Faithful

- v.18 *“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”*
- James is reminding us of the gospel. When you are tempted you are struggling with whether God is faithful. Has God abandoned me? Will God reward me for being faithful? Does God love me? How can God love someone tempted like me?
- James says, REMEMBER God saved you through Jesus! God is faithful. To echo Paul’s words in Romans 8, *“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”*
- This is an argument from the greater to the lesser. If God gave his Son for you, what is going to withhold from you?
- 1 Cor 10:13 – *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”*
- We win the battle of temptation internally with faith in God’s goodness and character. It is God’s goodness and faithfulness that are the truths that cut through the lies that are seeking to carry away and entice us to sin.

COMMUNION – the physical reminder that God is good and God is faithful.

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