

James 1:13-18 – Temptation – Part 1

Introduction

We all face trials and temptations. James has looked at the trials and circumstances we face in life that are beyond our control. James gave us five principles for dealing with trials.

Now we must ask, “where do these trials come from?” Who is to blame?

Many turn an blame God for their difficulties.

Introduction

James stands opposed to blaming God for sending enticement to do evil. James gives five proofs that God is not responsible in sending temptation or one's yielding to them. He explains:

- the nature of temptation (vs. 13),
 - the nature of man (vs. 14),
 - the nature of lust (vs. 16-17),
 - the nature of God (vs. 17),
- the nature of regeneration (vs. 18).

James 1:13-18

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

The Nature of Temptation

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The word for "tempted" has **two** basic but related meanings. Earlier the context defined it as "testing, assaying, or proving". It was used there of trials or testing to prove the genuineness of our faith.

Here in verse 13 the context defines it as "**temptation**", or "**solicitation to evil**". The difference in the Greek is not so much the word, but **one's response** to it. If a believer responds in faithful obedience to God's word, he successfully endures the trial. If he succumbs to it in the flesh, doubting God and disobeying His word, he is tempted to sin. A right response leads to spiritual endurance, righteousness, wisdom, and other blessings (vs. 2-12). Wrong responses lead to sin and death (vs. 15).

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1 Corinthians 10:13 states, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." **No one including the most spiritual Christian, can escape temptation.** Even Jesus in His humanity, who was without sin and perfect was tempted by Satan.

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Even as it is common for all men to be tempted, it is also common for man to blame someone or something else.

This blame is not only placed for his being tempted, but also in his yielding to it. When God confronted Adam in the Garden of Eden about his sin, his reply was, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." (**Genesis 3:12**). When God confronted Eve in verse 13 she replied, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

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In today's world we see that:

- The poor man blames his poverty for turning him into a thief.
 - The drug addict to justify his stealing.
- The alcoholic blames problems and pressures for driving him to drink and causing an accident.
- The moral decay of society is blamed on everything, but the sinful nature of man.

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James does not allow such foolish blame shifting.

Nor does James allow for the idea of blaming God.

Look again at verse 13. The phrase "Let no man say" literally carries the idea of "**Let no man say to himself.**" This not only implies outward communication, but also the internal rationalization of blaming God.

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Man has the tendency to **blame God for temptation**. One person remarked that since God is sovereign and in control of everything, that if God did not want him to sin, God would not allow him to be tempted". This is a thinly veiled mask that blames God for their own sinfulness.

Reference can also be made to the "flesh" or "old nature" but God has also given us His Holy Spirit, who gives us the power to do what is right when we turn and submit to Him.

Many openly blame God when things do not go right. When a person is displeased they often take the **Lord's name in vain**. In reality they are blaming God for their problems.

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It is unreasonable to conceive how any one who has not first been tempted by evil could tempt another to do evil. Temptation has to do with the appeal to our nature. **God is perfect in righteousness and holiness and cannot be the originator of sin.** There is absolutely nothing in God's nature that responds to evil. God is righteous and He leads only in paths of righteousness.

It must be understood that God is not merely good. Goodness and holiness are not standards that God lives up to. God is the standard. Goodness, holiness, and righteousness find their definition in the person and attributes of God.

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Since God is good, **evil is all that which is contrary to God's standards.** Since God is immutable (unchanging), He will not change His nature to accommodate evil. James can therefore state that "God cannot be tempted with evil". The term carries the idea of "**being untemptable**" or "without the capacity for temptation".

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The God of Scripture stands in sharp contrast to the pagan gods of James' day. The gods of the Greeks and Romans were made in the likeness of sinful man. They were filled with lusts, passions, and power, yet were devoid of the wisdom needed to use them properly. Mythology is filled with the wars, envy, rivalries, and lustful escapades of these beings.

In Contrast, Isaiah stood transfixed before God in Isaiah 6. There the seraphim cried out "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

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The Bible is filled with the Holiness of God.

Leviticus 19:2 - Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

1 Peter 1:16 - Because it is written, Be holy; for I am holy.

Habakkuk 1:13a - You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.

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In the **testing of Jesus** in the wilderness the difference between testing and temptation can be clearly seen. Matthew 4:1 reports that "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The remainder of the account (verses 2-14) makes it clear that from Satan's perspective, the experience was intended as temptation (inducement to sin), for Jesus the experience was a test, which He passed without the least wavering.

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Despite Satan's clever misuse of God's Word, he did not cause Jesus to waver in the least. None of Satan's offers appealed to our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin".

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God understands the consequences of sin. He alone realizes how sin has eaten away at His perfect creation like a cancer. He knows that yielding to sin is to reject the truthfulness of His own word and to yield Himself to Satan's authority.

God has no fleshly desire that sees sin and pleasurable, to Him sin is vile and revolting. May we come to see our own sin as God does.

So What ...

Though God is perfect, man is not. We carry a fallen fleshly nature. We are attacked on all sides. It is a relief to know that God is not against us. He is not placing traps for us to fall into. He does not delight in our failure. Rather He encourages us on. When we fall, He is there to help us stand. When we are weak, He makes us strong. When we are tired, He carries us through life. When the world crushes in upon you, where do you turn? There is only one place of refuge and that is in Christ.