

## James 1:13-18 – Temptation – Part 6

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### Introduction

James has been teaching that God is not responsible for our temptations, or our sin. James now uses the proof of the nature of regeneration.

Before salvation our conduct was dictated by the fallen world in which we lived, because our evil natures readily responded to it.

Because fallen man's problem is internal, the solution to his problem must be internal. There is no external ritual, ceremony, or action that can change one's basic evil nature. He cannot become righteous by trying to act righteously or talk righteously.

He needs a new heart, a new nature, and a new being.

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## 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. <sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

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## Nature of Holiness – Who Does It?

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Regeneration is strictly the act of God – “the Father of lights” and He does it “**of His own will**.” He washes away sin, grants forgiveness, and gives us a new nature to those who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He even takes residence in that life through His indwelling Spirit (**John 14:17; Rom. 8:9**).

The phrase “Of his own will” expresses the idea of the deliberate and specific exercise of will. That is the only way life could be given to those who are dead. Only the sovereign will of God, the Source and Giver of spiritual life can be responsible for regeneration.

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The natural man does not know that he needs such a change. He underestimates what he really needs and presumes he can make it satisfactorily by himself. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (**1 Cor. 2:14**).

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Paul assures us, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (**Eph. 2:4–5**). The only way a spiritually dead person can have spiritual life is to receive it as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. The Christian therefore can say with Paul, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (**Rom. 6:4**). “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him,” Jesus said (**John 6:44**), later adding, “You did not choose Me but I chose you” (**John 15:16**).

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## Nature of Holiness – What is it?

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

**“Of his own will He brought us forth”** “Brought us forth” is from the same verb rendered **“gives birth”** in verse 15. In regeneration, God gives birth to a new spiritual life. Regeneration is a miracle of God by which the principle of new life is implanted in man and the governing disposition of his soul is made holy. This is the new birth, being born again (cf. **John 3:3–8; Eph. 2:5–6; 1 Pet. 1:23; cf. Ezek. 36:25–27**).

In Christ believers actually “become partakers of the divine nature” (**2 Pet. 1:4**). Though the new birth is unseen by any human eye, it can be experienced by any human heart that turns to God through faith in Christ. It is evidenced in a transformed life.

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## Nature of Holiness – How Does It Happen?

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

**“By the word of truth”** could be rendered literally **“by the truth’s word,”** that is, by the Word of God, by Scripture.

In its broadest sense, therefore, the “word of truth” is the whole of God’s Word, and in its more restricted sense is the gospel, as Paul states in Ephesians 1:13, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

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## Nature of Holiness – Why is it Done?

James 1:18

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“That we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures”. Here James explains that the purpose for which God regenerates those who place their trust in Jesus Christ. Although salvation is the greatest possible blessing a human being can receive, its primary purpose is not to benefit man but to fulfill God’s sovereign purpose of believers becoming, the first fruits among His creatures.

**Leviticus 23:10-11, Exodus 23:19 and Deuteronomy 18:4** give God’s command of giving the sacrifice of “first fruits”. The first fruits were the first and best of the crops that were harvested and were usually an indicator of what the rest of the crop would be like. A farmer would be inclined to take that early harvest and store it away in case the rest was lost to drought, locusts, or other calamities. But the Lord required that it was to be that first and best which was offered to Him.

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When James writes “we”, he is applying the term to the believers of that time, perhaps especially Jewish believers who were the first of the harvest of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were the first of many more to come in the spiritual harvest God was beginning. Paul spoke of the household of Stephanas as being “the first fruits of Achaia”  
**(1 Cor. 16:15).**

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When referring to people, “His creatures” means all who will be saved (cf. **Acts 15:14–15**). The Greek term is used several times to refer to the material creation, so James may have had that also in mind. In an immeasurably greater way, those who are regenerated through Christ in this present age will be the first fruits among His creatures in His ultimate re-creation of the new heaven and new earth after the present heaven and earth have been destroyed (**Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:10**).

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## So What ...

God is not the author of our sin. God created a perfect creation that is marred by man’s sin. God did not abandon His creation, rather, He sought to redeem it. Every person who accepts Christ’s offer of salvation is being recreated into Christ’s image. God does not promote evil, rather He is the giver of all that is good. He gave us His Son, His Spirit, His love and grace and has adopted us into His family.

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