

TEMPTATION

JAMES 1:13-16

Text:

Introduction:

In his opening chapter, James has talked about the trials and tests of life. In verse 13, he moves into another brand of testing experience when he deals with the idea of being tempted with sin.

Notice in verse 13 that James does not say, “*if* a man is tempted,” but rather, “*when he is tempted...*” Temptation is an experience that is common to all people.

In this section, James gives us a basic course in the subject of temptation.

Before we move into this message I think it is important that we have an understanding of the difference between being tried and tempted.

Every temptation is a kind of test, but not every test is a temptation. A test is a trial posed by God to prove the strength of our faith. A temptation is a trial posed by Satan, with the wicked hope that we will fail.

Notice:

1. THE PLACE WHERE TEMPTATION STARTS

We live in a culture that likes to shift the blame, rather than accept it. However, in the text James makes it clear that we must accept much of the blame when it comes to the origin of temptation in our lives.

Notice with me a couple of things that James teaches us about the place where temptation starts. Notice first of all:

A. Who Is Innocent In Temptation

James 1:13

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:

In the earlier parts of this chapter, James indicated that God works through trials and tests to perfect Christian character in His people.

He makes it clear, however, in verse 13, that when the test of our faith takes the form of a solicitation to sin, God has no part of that temptation.

The holiness and purity of God are such that He has never tried to pull anyone else in that direction.

When temptation pushes the passion buttons in your life, you cannot say, as some do, “Well, God made me this way.”

Bad theology can be worse than no theology. When it comes to the matter of sinful temptation, James wants us to have the right theology.

When you face temptation, or when you fall to temptation, never point the finger of blame toward God.

Illustration:

If your house is destroyed by termites, you don't blame the architect. In a similar fashion, God is innocent when it comes to the process of sinful temptation.

Notice something further James teaches us about the place where temptation starts. Notice not only who is innocent in temptation, but notice also:

B. What Is Involved In Temptation

After showing that god is not responsible for sinful temptation, James moves on to verse 14 to tell us exactly who and what is responsible for temptation to sin.

James 1:14

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

James tells us there are two forces at work whenever you or I are tempted to sin. Those forces are *the lust within us* and *the lure around us*.

Think about the lust within us. James says a man is tempted by being “drawn away of his own lust.”

Temptation begins, not with a situation outside of us, but with the sin inside of us. The word translated “lust” speaks of the passions and desires of our soul. In this case, it is speaking of sinful passions.

You are not tempted by things that you do not naturally want.

You are tempted by things that you physically and mentally desire. There is a lust within you.

Think also about the lure around us. There are some interesting words in verse 14. They are the words “drawn away” and “enticed”.

The phrase drawn away describes a hunter’s trap that is baited in order to draw an animal out of its hiding.

The word “enticed” is a fisherman’s term. It speaks of luring a fish onto a hook by covering the hook with bait.

The Devil knows exactly what kind of bait appeals to your personal lust, and he is an expert at drawing you away and luring you into sin!

Understanding where a temptation starts, James goes on to give us a second lesson.

2. THE PRODUCT WHEN TEMPTATION SUCCEEDS

In verse 15, James explains what happens when we yield to our lusts, and a temptation is successful.

James 1:15

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

This verse serves as a warning to all who would give in to their temptations.

Notice a couple of things about this verse:

A. The Language That James Employs

Notice the words “conceived” and “bringeth forth”.

James is painting a word picture. He says that when our lust hooks up with an opportunity, a baby is conceived, and when it is born, the name on the birth certificate is sin.

However, rather than the joy that normally accompanies a birth, the end of that new creation is death.

When the unholy union of our lust and Satan's lure occurs, sin is the offspring, and death is the tragic end.

Notice not only the language James employs, but notice also:

B. The Law James Echoes

James is simply echoing one the fundamental doctrines of all Scripture. Sin leads to death.

God told Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed his commands regarding the tree, they would surely die.

Ezekiel affirmed the same:

Ezekiel 18:4

⁴Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Paul again affirms this:

Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The terminal consequence of sin is so much greater than mere physical death. It is spiritual death. It is separation from God.

Whenever we allow the conception of sin in our lives, we will suffer the consequence of death. For the Christian, that death is experienced in broken fellowship with Christ.

For the lost man, that death comes when for all eternity they are separated from God, and punished in a literal hell.

Illustration:

In 1997, two French soldiers were killed when a shell from World War I exploded in the ground beneath them. They were walking across a site where a battle had been fought 81 years earlier, and the bomb had lain dormant until they accidentally detonated it.

Though the effects of sin may not immediately be felt, they will inevitably be deadly. James teaches us that a successful temptation will ultimately bring forth the tragic product of death.

James teaches us a third lesson. He teaches us not only about *the place where temptation starts*, and *the product when temptation succeeds*, but notice also lastly:

3. THE PERSON WHOM TEMPTATION STOPS

James 1:16

¹⁶Do not err, my beloved brethren.

This short exhortation warns the reader not to be the kind of person who falls into the trap of temptation.

Who will be hindered and stopped by sinful temptation. First of all, it is:

A. Someone Who Is Deceived

The word “err” speaks of someone who is deceived.

This is what sin does – it deceives.

Sin promises a party but produces pain. Sin offers pleasure for a season, but quickly trades a delightful summer for a deadly winter.

James warns us in verse 16. Don't be the kind of person who is deceived by the candy-coated poison of sin.

Illustration:

The circus pioneer, P.T. Barnum used to have an exhibit that he called “The Happy Family”. It consisted of a cage housing a lion, a tiger, a panther, and a little lamb.

Someone asked Barnum how long he planned to continue the exhibit. He said, “The display will become a permanent feature...if the supply of lambs holds out.”

Don’t be the kind of person who is deceived. Don’t be so foolish as to think that a sheep like you can ever survive in a cage with the lion of Satan and the predator of sin.

Notice another aspect of this word “err”, and someone else who will be stopped by temptation. Notice not only that it is someone who is deceived, but also, it is:

B. Someone Who Is Distracted

Look again at that word “err”. It is translated from a word that not only speaks of being deceived, but it is also a word that describes someone who is led astray, and wanders away.

It is the word Jesus used in Matthew 18:12, when he talked about the sheep that had “gone astray”.

The person who is stopped by temptation is the person who wanders from the path they are supposed to follow as they are led astray by something that has tempted them.

As Christians we are called to follow after Him, looking to Him for direction and guidance.

When we are distracted by the allurements and enticements of sin, we wander away from Him and into trouble.

New York became the 18th state to ban texting while driving. The new law comes as studies have shown that drivers who are texting are 23 times more likely to crash than those who are not distracted.

Sheriff's deputy said, "...what causes accidents is the driver and his attention.

Listen again to the warning James gives us in verse 10. He says, "*Do not err, my beloved brethren.*" Don't be the kind of person who is stopped by temptation because you are deceived and distracted.

Close:

Every one of us needs to pay close attention as James teaches us about temptation; we face the danger of our lusts meeting the lures of this sinful world. The good news is that you don't have to give in to temptation. You don't have to err, and be led astray.

James breaks down the mechanics of a temptation, and warns us of its deadly consequence so that we will be better prepared to say "no" the next time we are tempted.

Matthew 26:41

⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.