

The Book Of James: Lesson 3

## Enduring Temptation

**Illustration/Setting The Stage:** “What is temptation?” Oxford definition: “A desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise.”

The Christian life is a life of constant struggle. We no longer just float with the current, but paddle upstream (new principles, new goals). And that’s not an easy thing to do. But God’s grace is sufficient to endure! Fruit bats eats ripe mango’s not green ones. Expect to be experience temptations and trials.

**James 1:12:** “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

*Blessed* – Allusion to the Sermon on the Mount, and a correction of the viewpoint that says one is unfortunate when they face difficulties and trials. *Endures* – Different from patience which suggests a passive submission. This word emphasizes the active staying power that makes men triumphant over their temptations and trials. Think marathon runner. *Temptation* – anything that tests faith and character – sickness, poverty, calamity, and enticement to sin.

### Sunday – The Root Of Temptation

James 1:13, 14; Matthew 6:13

Among the requests mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer, one asks: “Lead us not into temptation...” (Matt. 6:13) **Does God tempt, entice us to sin?** God does test or prove men and women. Abraham’s faith was tested when God asked him to offer up Isaac (Gen. 22:1). Israel’s faithfulness, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, was tested when God spoke the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:20). But God does not tempt people to sin

**(James 1:13).** Our first parents brought this accusation against God (Gen. 3:12, 13). Let us not blame God!

Having just prayed that the guilt of sin might be removed it is fitting that we would pray that we might not go back to it. The prayer Jesus is teaching us to pray is akin to what the psalmist prayer in Ps. 19:13: “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.”

It’s okay to pray that temptations don’t come (although they surely will) because of the discomfort and trouble they bring, the danger of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grief that follows.

**Where does James say temptation begins?** It begins in the mind (**James 1:14; Mark 7:21, 22**). This means we have a choice. No one can force us (Rom. 6:16-18). Natural inclinations and desires get our attention often. James uses hunting and fishing terms to describe these internal promptings. Our own desires (cravings) lure and entice us, and when we give into them they finally hook and entrap us.

Every person has their own particular craving which arise from their own temperament and experience. This fact doesn’t deny that there’s an external tempter and his minions who takes advantage of our weaknesses. But while they tempt us to sin, their temptations wouldn’t have any power if there were not in us a desire to respond to the inducement.

“No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act, before passion can dominate over reason, or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin.” (Messages to young People, p. 67) We can’t say, “God decreed my temptations,” or, “The devil made me do it.” We fall into temptation because of a desire to satisfy a particular craving that is contrary to the God’s will.

**Is it a sin to be tempted?** In short, no. See **James 1:14, 15**. Temptation can lead to sin, but it is not sin. Desire is not wrong. God has given us powerful desires including ambition, temper, sex, and every basic disposition. But desire becomes wrong when it oversteps its bounds and seeks gratification outside the will of God. Let's go to the next day to continue to answer this question.

### **Monday – When Lust Conceives**

James 1:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:5

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

Alexander Pope, *Essay On Man*, Epistle II, line 217

We are surrounded with sights and sounds that are appealing to the mind. It is through these emotional stimuli that unholy desires are presented to the mind. The temptation to lust is present, but it is not sin. As long as those desires are not gratified or fulfilled then they are not wrong. It is only when the mind responds to the desire to nurture or hold it, that the temptation turns into sin.

James statement compares the act of sin to fertilization and conception. Just as a bee carries pollen from one open blossom to another to fertilize the flower, so each human heart is open to the unholy thoughts and desires. If those seeds are allowed to mingle with the carnal nature, they produce an inevitable harvest of sin. Our only hope is to put a guard before every avenue to the soul to test every entering thought. Here are some promises for victory, even in the mind:

**1 Corinthians 10:13:** “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*.

**2 Corinthians 10:4, 5:** “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

**Philippians 2:5:** “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

**Matthew 4:1-4:** “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, and our energetic cooperation with the Holy Spirit and obedience to God’s word we can overcome.

## **Tuesday – Every Good & Perfect Gift**

James 1:16-18; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:23

**Read James 1:17.** God’s goodness is seen as the antithesis of “temptations” and “lusts,” meaning God doesn’t give us gifts that will harm us, but that will benefit us. He doesn’t send the problems that come from without or the temptations that come from within, instead He brings grace and strength to aid us in the fight against temptation.

**What is that gift?** Jesus and the new birth experience (James 1:18).

**1 Peter 1:23:** “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”

We must always remember that when we are tempted to do wrong, we are also tempted to do what is right. Because of Jesus victory over temptation He provides temptation to do what is right (**Heb. 2:17, 18**).

**Lust brings forth sin, and sin death. With such high stakes before us why don't we sometimes see more victory in the life?** Sometimes we lose the concept of the sinfulness of sin, it's danger, and what it did in crucifying the Savior.

### **Wednesday – Slow To Speak**

James 1:19, 20; Colossians 4:6

**Read James 1:19, 20.** *Swift to hear* - Though born by the word it doesn't excuse us from continuing to listen to the word. We should hear it with more attention. “He that has ears, let him hear.” (Luke 8:8; Rev. 2 & 3; 13:8, etc.) This admonition also embraces the general suggestion that we should be more ready to hear than to speak.

*Slow to speak* – Slow to begin speaking, not speaking slowly. Obviously a problem in the church in James' day (Jas 1:26; 3:1-18; 4:11). Don't be quick to blame God for the temptation or trial, or seek to justify a sin or yourself, or voice doubt.

“Take the word of Christ as your assurance. Has He not invited you to come unto Him? Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way. If you do you will lose much. By looking at appearances and complaining when difficulties and pressure come, you give evidence of a sickly, enfeebled faith. Talk and act as if your faith was invincible. The Lord is rich in resources; He owns the world. Look heavenward in faith. Look to Him who has light and power and efficiency.” (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 147)

*Slow to wrath* – A Christian should be able to restrain his temper. Some people need glue stick not chapstick.

**Proverbs 15:18:** “A wrathful man stirs up strife, but *he who is slow to anger allays contention.*”

**Proverbs 16:32:** “*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*”

**Colossians 4:6:** “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*” Jesus was said to speak “words of grace” in his own hometown synagogue (Luke 4:22). Words help or harm.

“Those who fulfill God’s will in their lives will be known for their eagerness to grow in their understanding of truth, for their self-control in not prematurely urging it upon others, and for their winsomeness in studying with those who disagree.”

### **Thursday – Saved By Receiving**

James 1:9-11, 27; 2:15, 16; 5:1-4

**Read James 1:21.** This verse concludes all that has been written thus far about faith and salvation. It’s an appeal to put away all impurity and separate ourselves from wickedness.

*Put away* – or “strip off” is used seven of the nine time in the NT for detaching oneself from evil habits (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:1). And God wants to give us clean white raiment, which represents a beautiful character made so by the work of the Holy Spirit in the life (Rev. 3:18).

**But does God cover our “filthy” garments with His pure, spotless robe?** If you get dirty, do you put nice, clean clothes over your dirty ones? No. Neither does Jesus.

**Zachariah 3:3, 4:** “Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And to him He said, “See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.”

This clean robe is offered to those who completely surrender to Him, chose to die daily to our old sinful ways, and allow God to create into His image. It is then that Christi’s righteousness covers us.

**Appeal:** God has done everything possible to remove sin and guilt from our lives. The most powerful tool He’s given us is His word, which when hid in our hearts leads us to victory.