

## James Part 3

Temptation / Truth

*James 1:13-18*

*Memory Verses: 1 Corinthians 10:13*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

So, we're in the book of James and we are still in chapter one. The main theme of the book of James is faith works, and over the course of the past two weeks we've begun to see how faith works in our lives... specifically in how it relates to our trials. And of course we've talked on this topic many times over the last couple of years... but if it hasn't become obvious to you yet, let me make this statement; one of the major themes of the Bible, one of the most common topics of all scripture is... how to overcome our trials.

And of course James begins here... why? Because James is in a trial. After the death of his half-brother; Jesus, James saw him come back from the grave. It was this amazing, ridiculous feat (that we will celebrate next week for Easter) that changed the course of James' whole life. He went from believing his brother to be a con-artist lunatic, to believing that he was God and the savior of the World. When James shifted his beliefs and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah and Lord of all humanity, he became an enemy of the state and Jerusalem's most wanted. And so as he is dodging and ducking the authorities that want to kill him, James is writing this letter to the Church, other Christians, who are in a similar spot. And James' main message is this; when you go through trials and storms... when you find yourself backed up against it and nothing is going as planned... keep the faith and keep working for Jesus no matter what. Faith works.

Last week was awesome in this regard right? Last week we saw that "every trial we face is a test of faith for our triumphant finish." God turns our trials into triumph in four different ways. Trials mature us, trials make us depend more on Christ, trials strengthen our faith as we confront doubts, and trials strengthen our personal relationships as we overcome resentment. Trials can make us better people and better Christians if we allow them to. So stop wasting your trials and start trusting Christ with your pain. When it comes to our trials; faith works.

But... external trials aren't the only thing we are up against in this world. We are also facing internal temptations... and let's not kid ourselves our temptations have the potential to be much more volatile than our trials. Look with me at **James 1:13-18**. It is clear from our study last week that God will not just allow us to go through trials but at times he actually creates trials in our lives in order to test our faith. But here

**verse 13** makes it clear that God will never directly be involved in our temptations. God may try our faith with trials but he will never entice us into sin. God cannot be tempted by sin and since leading someone else into sin is a sin, God cannot tempt us, he will not tempt us.

So where does our temptation come from? Look at **verse 14**... each person is tempted, lured, and enticed... by what? His own desire! Let's get real. If in a moment of weakness you give into temptation and sin... who do you blame it on? "If only my friend hadn't taken me to that party?" "If only the government had tighter restrictions on the internet?" "If God hadn't made me so poor then maybe I wouldn't have to steal?" "If Satan hadn't put that thought in my mind?" It's Satan... it's always Satan right? Wrong. Does Satan play a part in the temptations of this world? Yes... we will even see that later in James chapter 4... but according to scripture, the one ultimately accountable for our sin is us! **Romans 7:18** says, "I know that nothing good lives in me." The point is clear; God is perfectly sinless... we are utterly sinful. When it all boils down... you; not Satan, not your friends, not the government, not anything else... you are responsible for your sin.

For those of you who have struggled with sin only to shrug it off as someone else's fault... sin just got a lot more serious didn't it. If you can't pin it on someone else, if you can't blame it on God or Satan... well now you have to deal with it... and dealing with sin is not easy. Sin is deception... and **verse 16** tells us to not be deceived... so how exactly do we move from temptation into truth? How do we overcome the temptation to sin in our lives? Well, if you don't get anything else this morning I want you to get this. It's hard to bait a full fish. In other words... **When we feast on the blessings of God we lose our appetite for the base temptations of the flesh**. Feast on the goodness of God and you will no longer be attracted to sinful things.

There are two main truths I want us to focus on this morning that will keep us from falling into the trap of temptation.

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first truth I want us to notice is... **We Can Escape Temptation By Recognizing Its True Essence**. Look with me again at **vs. 14-15**. You see, sin doesn't just manifest itself from nowhere. Yes, we are sinful to the core but the acting out upon our sin is a process which the Bible clearly lays out here. There are four stages of sin.

The first is deception. Temptation is very deceptive. It hides its true nature. You won't immediately detect temptation as temptation. Look at the language that James uses here; lured and enticed. The word; lured refers to baiting a trap... a **trap** like this one. Temptation lures you to it just as one who baits a trap; the animal thinks it's just peanut butter or cheese or something wonderful... until they trip the wire and the trap snaps shut. The word enticed is very similar. It means to bait a hook. To the fish it looks like

a worm... but it's not... its a hook. It's not until we hear the door snap or feel the sting of the barb that we realize we've been deceived. **“Warren Weirsbe, in his commentary on James says this; temptation always carries with it some bait that appeals to our natural desires. The bait not only attracts us, but it also hides the fact that yielding to it's desires will eventually bring sorrow and punishment.”** Lot would have never went to Sodom if it weren't for the “well watered plains of Jordan.” David would have never committed adultery if he knew it would lead to the murder of his friend Uriah, the death of his own baby, and the rape of his daughter Tamar. **Temptation makes sure you only see the bait... never the hook!**

Deception is the first stage, which leads to desire. In other translations the word is lust. Now, lust isn't all bad, it's just means a carnal desire. If it weren't for natural desires.. we wouldn't survive. God has given us the desire of hunger to remind us to eat, the desire of thirst to remind us to drink. Without these desires we'd starve to death or dehydrate. God has given us the desire to sleep, which without our bodies could not rejuvenate and we'd go mad. God has given us the desire for sex, which without we'd go extinct. Sex.. do it for the kids. All of these are good desires... as long as they are within the confines of God's design. Natural desire become sinful desire when we ignore God's design. The natural desire to eat can become gluttony. The natural desire to drink can become alcoholism. The natural desire to sleep can become laziness. And the natural desire to have sex can become “porneia” which is the greek word for where we get porn. It means any sexual action outside the confines of marriage. **Hebrews 13:4** tells us that the marriage bed is undefiled but God will judge adulterers. Listen, these desires are necessary like steam in a boiler... no steam no power, but if not regulated you will get too much steam and that leads to destruction. Therefore our desires must be kept in constant check, and the only way to do that is by yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Deception leads to desire which leads to the third stage; disobedience. Once we are deceived and give into our sinful desires... we act! Being deceived is not a sin, desiring is not necessarily a sin unless dwelt upon, but acting on sin is sin. Deception is intellectual; fool me once shame on you, right? Desire is emotional; I want to follow my heart. But, disobedience is willful; you have willfully and deliberately acted upon the sinful desires of your heart. And here is the key... **Christian living is a matter of the will, not the feelings.** I hear people, grown adults say they don't feel like... I don't feel like reading the bible, I don't feel like going to church. That's ridiculous. That's the type of reaction we expect from children. Children act upon feelings, adults act upon reason – they act because it's right no matter how they feel. Therefore, we must practice saying no to our feelings and yes to God's will in our lives. The more we learn to say no to our feelings the easier it

will be to obey God's commands. Contrary to the message of this world, you can't simply do what feels right or feels good or feels natural – cause your feelings can be, and probably are wrong. Remember what **Jeremiah 17:9** says? The heart is deceitful. So we don't trust our hearts or our feelings... we trust God. **Phil 2:13** says; God works in us to do his will.

Deception leads to desire which leads to disobedience, which ultimately leads to death. In all actuality.. it leads to three deaths. First it leads to the death of your conscience. When sin matures into a full grown adult it takes over your life. At this point you have lost control. You are now controlled by your passions and are therefore a complete slave to your desires. There is no room left for God because you've filled it with the flesh. Secondly it leads to the death of your body. **Romans 6:23** says that he penalty for sin is death (we will all die a physical death because we are all born with sin). Third, it leads to the death of your soul. This is the final death, a spiritual death reserved only for those who refuse to repent of their sins and place their faith in Christ.

Deception, desire, disobedience, and death. Turn with me over to **Genesis 3:1-10**; where you can see the four stages clearly shown in the very first temptation. In **vs3-5** Eve is deceived as Satan lies to her, in **vs6** Eve desires the fruit, then in **vs6** she & Adam disobey God, take the fruit and eat it, and then in **vs7-10** they begin to die. First, they are ashamed and separate themselves from God; death of the conscience. Secondly in **vs19** God makes it clear that they will return to the dust of the ground; death of the body. And, then in **vs23** God puts them out of paradise; spiritual death and permanent separation from God.

The bottom line is clear... the true essence of temptation is – DEATH. Temptation has but one purpose... to kill your conscience, to destroy your relationship with God and others, and to ultimately murder your soul in hell forever. Don't be deceived by the lure of sinful pleasures – don't take the bait cause you will most definitely get the hook

So the first truth to help us avoid temptation is to be aware of the essence of temptation... but even greater is the second truth... **We Can Escape Temptation By Relying On The Truth of God's Goodness.** Look with me at **vs16-18** . How do I escape temptations? By knowing the truth – that it's a temptation, and by knowing the truth – that God is ultimately better than any sin I could ever indulge in. First, I have to get more of God's goodness in me and then I will have no room left for sinful lust. **When we feast on the blessings of God we lose our appetite for the base temptations of the flesh.** **2 Corinthians 10:13** tells us that God will provide a way out from under temptation. Look, when you find yourself facing temptation and you are looking for a way out... look to God. Notice the goodness of God here. God has only good gifts for you. If it is a gift, if it is good, it's from God. God's love and gifts for you don't change based on your

mistakes. So God is always going to give you good gifts, and even if you do give into temptation and sin, that isn't going to change the fact that God loves you and wants to shower you with blessings. When we repent of our sin he forgives and forgets. And God's gifts are undeserved and unconditional. Meaning, they are of his own will, of his grace. We don't deserve them and there's nothing we could ever do to earn them. The true essence of God is grace in Jesus Christ. **Jesus is the ultimate gift which should overshadow any other desire**. When we get Jesus... we get everything. Not only is he good but he covers all the bad. When we sin we are under the condemnation of God and sentenced to death... but when we repent and place our faith in Christ **there is no more condemnation in Jesus Christ - Romans 8:1**. Look, Jesus pays the payment for your sin, then Jesus takes away the punishment for your sin, and then Jesus takes away the lure of sin. When I'm full of God's good gifts and blessings... the ultimate of which is Jesus... I don't want sin... cause I'm already satisfied. **When we feast on the blessings of God we lose our appetite for the base temptations of the flesh.**

### Application

So let's boil all this down. No matter what... you can't escape temptations... but you can beat them. How? By knowing the true nature of sin. Deception leads to desire which leads to disobedience... which culminates in DEATH. The better you know what sin is and how it manifests itself in our lives, the easier it is to defeat. And by knowing the truth of God's goodness... which is ultimately salvation in Christ. If we trust in Christ to take away our sin and the lure of sin forever... if we feast on his goodness... we won't have any room for sinfulness. **When we feast on the blessings of God we lose our appetite for the base temptations of the flesh**

### Conclusion

\_\_\_\_\_ come up here. Sin is like this **Twinkie**. It looks good... it may taste good... but you don't really know what's inside it. It's actually not really good for you at all. So I could tell you why it's wrong to eat it... or I can offer you something better.

So... \_\_\_\_\_ come on out. Here we have a whole box of Little Debbie Oatmeal crè me pies. If you remember correctly I've used these in an illustration before... because they are so good! But that's not enough... so how about I sweeten the deal with some ice cream? That pretty good... but that's just not good enough. So how about we add a delicious coconut crè me pie? Still not convinced? Okay... how about a giant bag of candy... a cake... and a happy meal? Now... you can have the Twinkie... or you can have all this goodness. You can get with this or you can get with that! One is better. Here's the

point. God's gifts are so much better than the sin we may want to indulge in. If we would just find satisfaction in the goodness of Jesus... we'd never be hungry for sin. **When we feast on the blessings of God we lose our appetite for the base temptations of the flesh.**