

The Battle of Temptation

- James 1:13-16

- There is a story told about a little boy in a grocery store that I think illustrates the nature of temptation. The boy was standing near an open box of peanut butter cookies. “Now then, young man,” said the grocer as he approached the young man. “What are you up to?” “Nothing,” replied the boy: “Nothing.” “Well it looks to me like you were trying to take a cookie.” “You’re wrong, mister, I’m trying not to!” That’s temptation!!
 - C.S. Lewis – “No man knows how bad he is until he has tried very hard to be good.”
- Any way you cut it & any way you describe it, temptation is real & powerful.

I. The Source of the Temptation (vv.13-15)

○ Does God tempt us? (v.13a)

- i. Sin & the temptation of sin is one of the most deadliest things that we as Christians can play with. Yet, I dare say that the average Christian believes in their heart that they can handle the temptations that come their way ... and they are WRONG!
- ii. James begin this passage by bringing both sin & temptation to the forefront as he addresses a common question that is asked even today, “Does God tempt me?”
 1. 1:13a – “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God:”
- iii. Go all the way back to the Garden of Eden & you will find the truths of the dangers of temptation. They existed then & they still exist today.
 1. In the Garden of Eden, Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed both Eve and God.
 - a. "The serpent beguiled me," Eve said, trying to shift the blame ([Gen. 3:13](#)).
 - b. Adam was even more brazen: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, *she* [the word is emphatic] gave me of the tree, and I did eat" ([Gen. 3:12](#)). Adam tried to shift the blame for his disobedience to God.
 2. In our modern world today, we have found a way to make an excuse for just about every action we could possibly take & in the process find someone else to blame for our mistakes.
 - a. They shift the blame to their parents, their partners, or other people in general.
 - b. But God refuses to allow us to get away with such excuses. God will not let people blame Him for their sin.
 - i. We are accusing the very character of God when we raise such accusations against Him.
 1. God is holy. He hates sin!
 - ii. James goes on to say that, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man".
 - c. Temptation might come from many different sources or situations, but it will NEVER come from God.
 3. You say, “But Pastor, I have heard people talk about trials that come from God?” Oh, He may test us, but He will never tempt us.

- a. God tests us to bring out the good; Satan tempts us to bring out the bad.
- b. When you look at the life of Job, all of Satan's attacks on Job were designed in attempt to get him to turn his back on God.
- c. At the same time, God was testing His beloved servant and refining him.

II. The Steps To Temptation (vv.14-15a)

a. Lust (v.14)

- i. James points to the one sin that has a tendency to get us into far more trouble than we ever intended ... the sin of lust.
- ii. This one sin, if left unchecked, will bring about a lifetime of regret, pain & disappointment.
 - 1. We spend millions of dollars each year to try to come up with why people do some of the things that they do.
 - a. We study genetics to explain homosexuality.
 - b. We research the ergonomics of society to explain away the horrendous criminal acts that are taking center stage today.
 - c. We evaluate the chemical balances of folks to determine if they should be held responsible for the acts that they commit.
 - d. And by-in-large what we are doing is excusing the sinful habits & lifestyle for this generation without holding them accountable for their actions.
- iii. However, James is careful to point out that we don't have that right to excuse the sinful actions of others, and rest assured God will NOT excuse them either!
 - 1. The Bible does not treat sodomy as a sickness, a psychosis, or a genetic problem; it treats it as sin.
 - 2. In the Old Testament, God's law pronounced the death penalty on people who practiced sodomy, adultery, bestiality, and incest. God did not condemn people to death for being sick or for behaving according to the dictates of their genes. He condemned them to death for practicing soul-destroying, society-polluting sins.
 - a. He said, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" ([Matt. 6:27](#)). That is a genetic function.
 - b. To the woman taken in adultery, He said, "Go, and sin no more" ([John 8:11](#)). Hers was a responsible & deliberate choice.
- iv. Satan comes along and plants the living factor of temptation alongside the latent factor of lust, and this is where sin has the opportunity to takes place.
 - 1. The alcoholic who suffers with the temptation of alcohol is invited to a party or a gathering where the poison is offered.
 - 2. Alongside the pornographic lust he plants a dirty book, a filthy movie, or a suggestive picture.
- v. Interestingly enough, these temptations seem to take place when we are struggling, disappointed or discouraged either physically or spiritually.
- vi. However, the temptation itself is not where the sin occurs.

b. Enticed

- i. "It's a sin to be tempted." Not so, for Jesus was tempted, yet WITHOUT sin. The sin occurs when we fall to the power of the temptation & we commit the sin we have been tempted with.
- ii. Some people fall into temptation, but if we are honest, many of us make plans for disaster ahead of time.
 1. "Son," ordered a father, "Don't swim in that canal." "OK, Dad," he answered. But he came home carrying a wet bathing suit that evening. "Where have you been?" demanded the father. "Swimming in the canal," answered the boy. "Didn't I tell you not to swim there?" asked the father. "Yes, Sir," answered the boy. "Why did you?" he asked. "Well, Dad," he explained, "I had my bathing suit with me and I couldn't resist the temptation." "Why did you take your bathing suit with you?" he questioned. "So I'd be prepared to swim, in case I was tempted," he replied.
 2. The remedy for such dangerous action is found in Romans 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh,"
 3. You see, Satan can *persuade*, but he cannot *push* you into sin.
 - a. "The devil made me do it."
 - b. Go back to the Garden of Eden
- iii. There are even times when our enticement is the feeling that God is "shorting" us or not giving us what we feel we deserve.
 1. Illustration of Eve. (Gen. 3:6)

III. The Method of Sin (v.15b)

- The sin, now conceived, grows and develops. The word that James uses for "finished" (*apaotele*) means "to bring to maturity," or "to become full grown."
- As Paul puts it, sin becomes "exceeding sinful" ([Rom. 7:13](#)). It grows in strength, and its influence spreads progressively.
 - The man who drinks becomes a hopeless drunkard.
 - The man who smokes marijuana goes on to cocaine and heroin.
 - The man who indulges in pornography takes it much further than he ever intended.
 - One of Samson's problems was he thought that he could play games with Delilah, and we see who won. She saw him blinded and bound, grinding corn for the Philistines, the sport of his enemies and the mockery of the world. The sin grows in size, it spreads, and it cannot rest until it has others in its coils.
- But James has not finished. He tells us about *the maturity of sin*: "for sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" ([1:15c](#)).
 - It puts its hand upon character and kills it.
 - It puts its hand upon health and kills it.
 - It puts its hand upon a Godly marriage & kills it.
 - Upon a good man/woman & destroys their testimony.