

“Each One Is Tempted”

April 22, 2012

Text: James 1:13-15

Author, Kent Hughes, suggests we apply to ourselves the following questions covering 5 areas of moral purity=>

1. Are we being desensitized by the present evil world? Do things that once shocked us now pass us by with little notice? Have our sexual ethics slackened?
2. Where do our minds wander when we have no duties to perform?
3. What are we reading? Are there books or magazines or files in our libraries that we want no one else to see?
4. What are we renting at the local video stores? How many hours do we spend watching TV? How many adulteries [and fornications] did we watch last week? How many murders? How many did we watch with our children?
5. How many chapters of the Bible did we read?

In today's text, James will discuss temptation/lust, stating what we all know to be true=> *“Each one is **tempted**.”*

Last Sunday we considered the wonderful promise found in

Jms 1:12=> *“Blessed is a man who perseveres under **trial** [peirasmós] ; for once he has been approved, he will receive the **crown of life**.”*

Today's text will take that same basic word (*peirasmós*) and translate it *“temptation,”* instead of *“trial.”*

As we have seen, *trials* are used by God to test/affirm our faith, and to strengthen it so that we will become spiritually mature.

But Satan wants to turn those same trials into temptations (solicitations to evil, intended to harm us spiritually).

There are 3 essential differences between trials/temptations:

- 1) The originator—God tries us, Satan tempts us.

- 2) The originators' intentions—God tries us for our good;
Satan tempts us, hoping to destroy us spiritually.
- 3) Our response—when we don't react to God's tests/trials
w/ enduring faith, they become temptations to sin.

Having discussed the joy of dealing w/ trials successfully in the 1st 12 verses, James now considers the potential of our failure, allowing trials to become temptations.

A proper understanding of such failure can serve to forewarn us, and to help guard us against its consequences.

Wise Xns pray as X has taught us, "*Lead us not into temptation*" (Lk 11:4).

They also approach trials as James has taught us, counting them all joy, realizing their powerful potential for good, if we will endure them obediently by faith;
But also their potential for harm, if we let them become temptations.

James has been down this road himself, & he knows the terrible feelings of guilt/shame that come w/ yielding to temptation. He also knows it's man's sinful inclination from childhood to look for someone else to blame for our failure.

And he knows that the first One we are likely to blame is God Himself, as we think, "He led me by His sovereignty into this temptation, so it's ultimately His fault that I failed."

It's an amazing fact of life that man's fallen nature is always inclined to pick a fight w/ his blessed Creator.

Prov 19:3=> *"The foolishness of man subverts his way,
And his heart rages against the LORD."*

Even more amazingly, Xns (who know better) tend to blame God when they yield to temptation.

James insists that God isn't to blame, that we must stop ourselves from thinking He is, and that we must keep from saying it, even if that thought enters our mind.

We must constantly remind ourselves of His wonderful nature/character/attributes, and worship Him in our prayers.

Blaming God would only double Satan's victory.

When he has already gotten us to yield to some temptation, we only make things worse by blaming God, giving Satan the even more significant victory of causing us to blaspheme our Lord's holy name.

So James says *"No one!"* (a very emphatic word) is to accuse God of causing us to sin, no matter how severe his trials.

God's Word reveals Him to be infinitely good, not blameworthy.

We simply cannot hand Satan another victory, by letting him persuade us to question God's character.

God cannot/must-not be blamed for our failures.

The blame lies elsewhere, & James will explain where.

James teaches us 3 steps for getting back on track when our lack of faith causes our trials to deteriorate into temptations.

He tells us to Repudiate the Lie (that God is to blame for our sin), to Realize the Truth, & to Recognize the Danger.

*** Step #1—Repudiate the Lie**

[James 1:13]=> *“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”*

“Tempted by God” refers to an indirect cause of temptation.

The notion that God would directly tempt someone isn’t even being considered here, and the one who has succumbed to temptation isn’t accusing Him of that.

He’s saying God sovereignly controls the situation in which the temptation occurred, so He’s indirectly to blame for this person’s sin.

But James demands that no one is even to say that!

Adam tried to play that same game, accusing God of indirectly causing him to sin, by arguing=> *“The **woman** whom **Thou gavest** to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”*
(Gen 3:12).

When we are guilty, everything in our flesh wants to scream, “It’s not my fault!”

The obvious question is=> Then whose fault is it?

Our fallen nature wants to snap right back “Yours!” so that we can become the accuser instead of the accused.

But Adam discovered, that tactic doesn't work with God, &
neither does it work when Satan whispers in our ear,
"Blame God for your having yielded to temptation."

**Instead of blaming God, we must fervently repudiate any
notion that He's in any way responsible for tempting us.**

- * Repudiate the lie that we sinned because of the heredity
or environment to which God has sovereignly
assigned us.
- * Repudiate the lie that the reason we got so angry because
was that God hadn't healed us of our high blood
pressure.
- * Repudiate every lie that removes from us the
responsibility for our own sins.

I Cor 10:13=> *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is
common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow
you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the
temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you
may be able to endure it."*

Whatever the temptation to which we succumb, God has
monitored it, to keep it w/i the limits of our ability to
endure-it/handle-it.

He has also provided us w/ the strength of faith to
overcome it, by enduring it, escaping from failure
under its pressure.

If we failed the test, we have no right to blame Him,
because He's done everything needful to keep us
from failing.

**Now James gives us 2 reasons why we must repudiate the lie
that God is responsible for our yielding to temptation=>**

Reason #1—It would be inconsistent w/ His character.

James says, “*God cannot be tempted by evil.*”

The lit. wording is=> “God is untemptable” by evil.

God and evil have nothing to do with one another, each
being totally repugnant to the other.

God is “*Holy, holy, holy*”—completely separate from
anything/everything that's unholy/evil.

Hab 1:13 (Habakkuk to God)=> “*Thine eyes are too pure
to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on
wickedness with favor.*”

Reason #2—It would be inconsistent w/ God's behavior.

James=> “*He Himself does not tempt anyone.*”

He sent His Son to die, in order to take away our sinfulness.

The idea that He (for even a moment) might lead a believer
into another sin for which His own Son would have
to suffer/die, is ludicrous.

You/I may think that way, when we're being severely
tested, but it's a Satan-inspired lie, that we should
ban from our minds.

God would never do anything to make us sin.

He is not only a holy/sinless God, He is also our
loving Heavenly Father, who longs for His
children to become perfectly holy like Himself.

**Someone: Then what about the Lord's prayer=> "*Lead us
not into temptation*"? (Lk 11:2).**

1st, as we have just seen, God does not tempt anyone, enticing
them into sin, because that would not be consistent with
His character, & with all we know about His behavior.

But notice that Jesus' prayer doesn't say, "**Tempt** us not," but
"*Lead us not into temptation,*" & there's a big difference
between leading, & actually tempting.

For God to "*lead*" us into temptation is not only possible, it's
usual, in the sense that every trial/hardship has the potential
of turning into a temptation to turn our back on our faith—
in disobedience/defeat.

X, our Captain, does lead us onto battlefields where we can
be strengthened by the battle.

We must choose either to endure the difficulty by faith, &
by the power of the H.S., considering it all joy;
Or to desert and go AWOL, spiritually, in the heat
of the fight.

By God's grace, we overcome Satan's attack against our
faith, and come away stronger in faith than ever.

We pray not to be led into temptation because we dread the close
brush with sin that temptation will always/inevitably bring.

We pray to avoid it, just as Jesus prayed=>

“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will but as Thou wilt.”

We pray, just as Jesus told His disciples in Lk 22=>

*“**Pray that you may not enter into temptation**”*
after He had just told Peter, *“Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat”* (22:40, 31).

Peter didn't pray to avoid temptation, & he got sifted.

* **Realize the Truth** (a 2nd principle for dealing w/ temptation)

Having explained where temptation *doesn't* come from (God)

James now explains where it *does* come from (our own lust).

[Verse 14]=> *“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”*

This is a universal principle, applicable to all men/women, which is why James said “*each one*.”

The source of the temptation is not God, and it's not even the object on which our lust has become fixated.

It's our lust itself, which has made some sin appear more appealing to us than righteousness/holiness.

This is good news in the sense that we can do something about temptation, since it comes from w/i us.

If it came from some outside source, we couldn't do anything about it.

“*Lust*” (*epithumia*) is strong/compelling desire.

That doesn't mean that every strong desire is sinful lust.

E.g. 1 Tim 3:1=> “*If any man aspires to the **office of Overseer** [elder], it is a fine work he **desires** [epithumeo] to do.*”

But when man’s depravity turns his desire into a craving for something God has forbidden, it becomes an idol in his life which separates him from God—that’s lust.

* E.g. under the influence of Satan, Eve developed such a desire for the fruit which God had forbidden, in the Garden.

* E.g. Jesus said=> “*Everyone who looks on a woman to **lust** for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart*” (Mt 5:28).

If this man were looking at his own wife, it wouldn’t be adultery/lust because God doesn’t forbid that, but actually created that desire.

But in this case it is lust, because the man’s desire is for a woman who doesn’t belong to him.

James describes the dynamics of temptation.

He says temptation occurs when a person allows his lust to take control of him—that is, his thinking process.

James uses passive verbs, because the person is passively allowing himself to be controlled by his feelings of lust.

James says 1st, he is “*carried away*”—which lit. means “drawn/dragged-out.”

He’s not thinking rationally, but responding emotionally.

You might say he's been dragged out of his mind, having been drawn out by the intensity of his illicit feelings for some-thing/some-one.

2nd, he is "*enticed*"—a fishing term that means to catch with bait.

Trout have a sense of smell 500 times greater than man's.

They tend to be leery of bait, & sometimes make several passes, brushing it w/ their bodies, before they bite.

But if a fish is really hungry, or if the object it's watching makes certain kinds of movements that trigger an instinctive reaction in their brains, they will throw caution aside, and swallow the bait, "hook, line, and sinker" (as they say).

The hook sets itself in their flesh, and the fisherman starts reeling them in, towards the net.

The fish was perfectly free to ignore the bait and swim away (which in my own case, seems to happen most of the time).

But having decided the potential pleasure of consuming that bait was worth the risk & then having swallowed it, escape was no longer a possible option for the fish.

The whole transaction was based on deception, & the bait may have been nothing but a feather tied to a hook.

It could never have satisfied the fish, even if it weren't connected to the fisherman's line, w/ a concealed hook.

In the same way, when man willfully responds (w/ overwhelming desire) to things which God has forbidden, he sets in motion a series of tragic consequences.

Sadly, God knows that whatever the bait was that snagged & trapped him, it could never have really satisfied his soul, anyway.

But the person made the decision, got trapped by it, and couldn't let go, so now he must face the consequences.

Meanwhile, he has compromised a relationship with God which could indeed satisfy his soul.

18th century New England preacher, Jonathan Edwards, described lust as an irrational self-destructive form of slavery.

1st, he pointed out that it can never be satisfied (it's a demanding/treacherous task-master).

The more you serve it, the more it demands from you, until it works you to death.

2nd, lust bans the use of reason, so that man will actually face hell's eternal fires rather than respond to it rationally.

He will lie, steal, swear, defraud, and corrupt his own body/mind in order to satisfy lust's demands.

3rd, lust offers no real advantage/benefit to its slaves, only the wages of sin—which is death.

4th, lust blinds its slaves so they cannot see that they are
choosing misery/death, rather than life/true-joy.

Quoting Edwards=> “It will not suffer him to love that which
is truly lovely & amiable, such as a most excellent &
glorious God, a most lovely Jesus, holiness, amiable
Christianity, the saints and the like, but only those things
which are loathsome and hateful.”

5th, lust requires the whole man to serve, it not just his body
(as is true of most forms of slavery).

It controls his soul, his thoughts/beliefs, his will, and
his affections/loves a/w/a his body (the whole
man).

Lust is choosing that which God forbids, over God Himself.

It may seem like an act of moral freedom, but it actually
leads to a treacherous/ruinous form of slavery.

*** Recognize the Danger**

This is the 3rd step that can help us to backtrack, when we’ve
allowed our trials to deteriorate into temptations;

But it’s also a preventative, to keep that from happening.

[Verse 15]=> “*Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to
sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*”

**James portrays an inevitable sequence of events here, that
should serve as a warning to avoid temptation.**

This is the flip side of the sequence we saw back in verses 2-4=>

The testing of our faith produces endurance, and
endurance leads to spiritual maturity.

Here in verse 15, lust leads to sin, and sin leads to death.

One is heavenly, the other is hellish.

In verse 14, the temptation began w/ a person's lust carrying him away, and enticing him.

Now something evil/ugly called "sin" comes to life within him, producing two more generations of evil, each worse than lust itself.

I once heard this process compared to an old ice machine.

Those machines prob. don't still exist today, but when they did, you'd put a quarter in the slot, and after a bit of rumbling/shaking, out popped a 10 lb. block of ice.

There was no way to change your mind, & cancel the order.

As soon as the quarter was dropped into the slot, the ice was on its way, & all the rumbling/shaking guaranteed it would come.

In the same way, once we open up our hearts to lustful thoughts, the consequences begin, & they're virtually irrevocable.

But in this case, those consequences are sin/death, not just a block of ice.

Someone has knowingly defied God's will, & that has set a spiritual dynamic into motion, that will inevitably end in some form of death.

Is it absolutely impossible to stop the process?

No, repentance will stop it at any point along the way, like pulling the plug on the ice machine.

But the longer we wait, the harder it gets to repent.

And even repentance won't eliminate the feelings of shame.

It can, however, preempt our sin from growing into a full-blown character trait.

The actual sequence outlined by James is that lust conceives & gives birth to sin, then sin, grows up to produce death.

James is referring to death as a general concept, in all its forms.

“*Death*” represents the separation of 2 things, which must be together if there is to be full/real life.

1) Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul.

2) Spiritual death is separation of man's spirit from God, the ultimate Source of life.

John 1 says of Jesus=> “*In Him was **life**, and the **life** was the light of men*” (1:4).

If life (abundant life) is found in X, what do you have apart from Him? No light and non-life—death.

3) “Second death” is irretrievable separation of man's soul from God, making fellowship w/ Him forever impossible/unattainable.

Heb 11:25 mentions “*the passing pleasures of sin*” because there is pleasure to be found in sin—the gratification of our lust.

But there are 2 problems with those pleasures=>

* They pass quickly.

* They lead to death, so that sinful pleasure is always tainted/compromised by the knowledge that it contains hidden hooks, that lead to death, in all its forms.

The wages of sin is always/invariably death, in some form.

The best defense=> avoid anything/anyone who stirs up our lust.

That can include magazines/movies/friends,
places/situations/everything-else that might entice
you/me to lust/sin.

Someone: “That’s legalism!” No, that’s simply self-preservation from spiritual death.

Through faith in X, the Xn is saved from spiritual death.

But he can allow himself to live his life in a spiritual environment of lust/sin/death, which is just as ridiculous as living in a graveyard/morgue.

The world laughs about sin, but it’s deadly, and spiritual death is even less laughable than physical death.

Before we close, let’s consider a few practical suggestions for dealing effectively with temptation.

1. Be honest w/ yourself about your vulnerability to it.

Spiritually speaking, our flesh is our “Achilles heal”
causing even the great Apostle Paul to say,
*“Wretched man
that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this*

death?” (Rom 7:24).

Jesus said=> *“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the **flesh is weak**” (Mt 26:41).*

The moment we think to ourselves, “I can handle this temptation/enticement/R-rated-movie,” we’re already in trouble—like Peter.

2. Arm yourself beforehand by renewing your mind.

Rom 12:2=> *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

This is where we get the jump on the temptations of lust.

They appeal to our feelings, which are very difficult to control, but renewing our minds preempts those feelings, & our minds are more easily controlled.

We renew/guard our minds by getting into the Bible everyday and saturating our thoughts with its truth.

Psa 119=> *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to **Thy word**. / With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. / **Thy word** I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee” (Psa 119:9-11).*

In addition, we can program our minds w/ good things rather than evil things, as Paul told the Philippians=>
“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,

whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things” (Phil 4:8).

I ask myself, “Do I feel the desire right now to become a more holy man?” knowing that, if I don’t, I’m just as vulnerable to temptation as Peter, no matter how strong I may feel.

When the answer to that question is “No, I feel indifferent about my own holiness,” it’s time for me to read the writings of some great old holy men=> Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, Bunyan, Baxter, A.W. Pink, A.W. Tozer, Martin Lloyd-Jones, and others.

3. Form a right relationship with the HS, yielding yourself to Him.

*“Be **filled** with the **Spirit**, / speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:18-19).*

*“**Walk** by the **Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire [epithumia—lust] of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).*

4. If you fall into sin (& you will) run back to X, your great H.P.

Heb 4=> *“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been **tempted** in all things as we are, yet without sin. / Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive **mercy** and may find grace to help in time of **need**” (4:15-16).*

When we sin, we need mercy, & Jesus has plenty to give,
whenever we need it.

“Each One Is Tempted”

April 22, 2012

Text: James 1:13-15

1. Trials are used by God to test and affirm our faith; but Satan wants to turn those same trials into temptations (solicitations to evil intended to [10 harm] us spiritually).

Jms 1:12; Lk 11:4; Prov 19:4

2. Amazingly, Christians who know better tend to blame [8 God] when they yield to temptation.

James teaches us three steps for getting back on track when lack of faith causes our trials to deteriorate into temptations...

*** Repudiate the Lie**

[James 1:13]

Gen 3:12

3. Instead of blaming God, we must fervently repudiate any notion that He is in any way responsible for [18 tempting] us.

I Cor 10:13

Two reasons why we must repudiate the lie that God is responsible for our yielding to temptation...

- *4. Reason #1—It would be inconsistent with His [22 character].

Hab 1:13

- *5. Reason #2—It would be inconsistent with God’s [20 behavior].

Lk 11:2

6. We pray not to be led into temptation because we dread the close brush with [8 sin] that temptation will always, inevitably bring.

Lk 22:40, 31

*** Realize the Truth**

[Verse 14]

I Tim 3:1

7. When man’s depravity turns his desire into a craving for something God has forbidden, that is [10 lust].

Mt 5:28

8. When man willfully responds with overwhelming desire to things which God has forbidden, he sets in motion a series of [14 tragic] consequences.

9. Lust is choosing that which God forbids over God Himself; it leads to a treacherous, ruinous form of [16 slavery].

*** Recognize the Danger**

[Verse 15]

10. Lust conceives and gives birth to sin, then sin grows up to become death; James is referring to death as a general concept in [8 all] its forms.

Jn 1:4; Heb 11:25

Practical suggestions for dealing effectively with temptation...

*11. Be honest with yourself about your [28 vulnerability] to it.

Rom 7:24; Mt 26:41

*12. Arm yourself beforehand by [18 renewing] your mind.

Rom 12:2; Psa 119:9-11; Phil 4:8

*13. Form a right relationship with the Holy Spirit [18 yielding] yourself to Him.

Eph 5:18-19; Gal 5:16

*14. If you fall into sin (and you will), run back to [14 Christ] your great High Priest.

Heb 4:15-16