

GOD DOES NOT TEMPT MAN TO SIN

TEXT : JAMES 1:13-17

INTRODUCTION :

1. In my previous messages from the book of James, we noted that the Bible uses the word "temptation" in two different ways: solicitation to evil, and testing under trial (Scofield's notes, p. 1307, bottom).
2. God often tests us (1:2, 12), but God never tempts us to sin. God's testings under trial are for our good and they help build Christian character. (1:2-4).
3. God tests us, but God never tempts us to do evil (1:13).

I. GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SIN (1:13, 17)

1. Just as God's trials are designed to bring out the best in us – unholy temptations are designed to bring out the worst in us (1:13, 14).
2. God designs trials to strengthen us; the devil designs temptations to destroy us.
3. God does test or try men, as far as their faith is concerned (1:2-4), but God never tempts men to do evil.
4. God by His very nature, "cannot be tempted with evil," therefore, He cannot be the cause of men doing evil. "Neither tempteth He any man" (1:13).
5. James emphasizes that God cannot entice men to sin because God only does good, not bad – "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above..." (1:17).
6. With God, there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (1:17). Men change, the seasons change, the sun, moon and stars change – but God never changes.
7. God is always good and He never tempts men to sin.
8. Some have been perplexed over verses like Amos 3:6, which says, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"
9. The word "evil" in Amos 3:6 does not refer to sin or moral evil, but to calamity or judgment. Isaiah 45:7 says, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil : I the LORD do all these things."

10. God is the one who brings (or allows) trials and calamities, and often it is in judgment (e.g., the Babylonian captivity). God is sovereign.

11. While we are on this subject, I should mention that followers of John Calvin are wrong when they teach that God is the author of sin. For example, Calvin said, "Nothing happens other than what God decrees."

12. It is better to say, " Nothing happens other than what God allows ."

13. But Calvin said, "The devil and all the ungodly are reined in by God, so that they cannot conceive, plan or carry out any crime, unless God allows it, indeed commands it ." Not allows it, but "commands it."

14. The Westminster Confession (1643): "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin ; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures."

15. Some feel their disclaimer -- "neither is God the author of sin" -- solves their problem, but it doesn't. It just illustrates some of the inconsistencies and contradictions of the Calvinist system.

II. SIN COMES FROM WITHIN A MAN (1:14)

1. Man is always ready to shift responsibility for his sins. We see this way back in the Garden of Eden – Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent.

2. We see it when Moses questioned Aaron about the golden calf and dancing and all of the other wickedness that broke out while he was up on the mount. Aaron blamed it on all the others. " And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people , that they are set on mischief" (Ex. 32:22).

3. King Saul tried that same approach when he was confronted by Samuel. Saul said to Samuel, "They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen..." (I Sam. 15:15).

4. This is human nature. Man is always ready to shift the blame to someone else. This blame-shifting is prevalent in modern psychiatry – it's not your fault, blame it on your parents, you have a "sickness," etc.

5. There is a song which goes:

I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalysed

To find out why I killed the cat and blackened my husband's eyes.

He laid me on a downy couch to see what he could find,

And here is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind:

When I was one, my mommy hid my dolly in a trunk,

And so it follows naturally that I am always drunk.

When I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day,

And that is why I suffer now from kleptomania.

At three, I had the feeling of ambivalence towards my brothers,

And so it follows naturally I poison all my lovers.

But I am happy; now I've learned the lesson this has taught;

That everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault. (Anna Russell)

6. But the Bible says we have no one to blame but ourselves. The problem is within us; we have a rotten old, sinful nature that is corrupt and it will not go away.

7. Karl Augustus Menninger (1893 – 1990), was a psychiatrist who wrote a book entitled, *Whatever Became of Sin?*

8. On October 6, 1988, less than two years before his death, Karl Menninger wrote a letter to Thomas Szasz, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the SUNY in Syracuse, and the author of *The Myth of Mental Illness*, and *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*, acknowledging that he too had finally come to the conclusion that psychiatry was basically wrong.

9. The word "entice" (1:14) means literally to "lure by a bait" or "to catch fish with bait." The devil has his hook in the water and he uses different bait for each person – drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, money, etc. The Aqueduct "racino" in Queens drew 65,000 customers during its first weekend of operation.

10. One preacher put it this way: "Those who would not fall into the river, should beware how they approach too near to its banks...He who would not drink of the wine of wrath, let him not touch the cup of pleasure. He who would not hear the passing-bell of eternal death, should not finger the rope of sin. A person who carries gunpowder about him, can never stand too far from the fire. If we accompany sin one mile, it will compel us to go twain" (William Secker).

11. In 1:13-15, James makes no mention of the devil's role as "the tempter" (he is called "the tempter" in Matt. 4:3 and I Thess. 3:5), but does refer to him later on in James 4:7 -- "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

12. Oftentimes people say, "The devil made me do it," when James 1:14 says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

13. The devil is not omnipresent. All sins cannot be blamed on the devil and his demons. There is enough wickedness in your heart and in my heart that the devil could be a thousand miles away and we would still be capable of committing the most terrible sins.

14. Our Lord made this clear when He said that evil comes from "out of the hearts of men" (Mark 7:15,18-23).

III. SIN BRINGS FORTH DEATH (1:15, 16)

1. People often wonder: is temptation sin? No, it is only sin when man yields to the temptation. Our Lord was tempted by the devil in the wilderness but He certainly did not sin.

2. Martin Luther said: "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

3. The right course of action is to expel all evil thoughts before things get out of hand. Our Lord always provides a way of escape.

4. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

5. When David was up on his rooftop, he saw Bath-sheba bathing. Our Lord said, "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). David had a way to escape but he chose not to take it.

6. According to what our Lord said in Matthew 5:28, David was guilty before he even met Bath-sheba. Second Samuel 11:3 says, "And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

7. "And David sent messengers, and took her..." (II Sam. 11:4). By the time David sent for Bathsheba he was already in big trouble.

8. The idea is to expel lustful thoughts quickly, but all too often, people encourage these lustful thoughts, and dwell on them, and nourish them, and enjoy them.

9. Then it is too late – "lust hath conceived" (1:15). "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (1:15) – and what an ugly brat!

10. "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (1:15). The Bible gives us many examples of this principle -- Pharaoh, Korah, Achan, Haman, Judas, Herod, and many others.

11. I mentioned King David. Remember, his baby died, and then Amnon and Absalom, his two sons died, and then Amasa, his nephew died.

12. We need to realize that Christians are not exempt from this principle. James 1:16 says, "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

13. Ananias and Sapphira were killed by the Lord (Acts 5).

14. God was ready to kill the immoral Christian in Corinth but he repented (I Cor. 5:5). Second Samuel 12:13 says that Nathan the prophet said to David, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." This suggests that if David had not repented he would have died.

15. God kills Christians who partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (I Cor. 11:29, 30).

16. Hebrews 12:9 says, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

17. John warns that there is a "sin unto death" (I John 5:16).

18. Sin not only produces physical death, but more importantly, it results in spiritual death ("For the wages of sin is death" – Rom. 6:23).

19. This means eternal separation from God in the lake of fire, what John calls the "second death" (Rev. 20:14).

20. When the evil thoughts in man's heart join up with outward temptations, lust will conceive and bring forth sin (1:15).

21. The progress of sin is easy to understand – lust, sin, death. Death follows sin as naturally as night follows day – it is inevitable.

22. Notice the contrast – the man "that endureth temptation" receives "the crown of life" (1:12). But the man that yields to sin receives a different payment – death. The choice is before us.

23. James adds these solemn words: "Do not err, my beloved brethren" (1:16). In other words, do not be deceived, do not be led astray. Sin deceives people, sin blinds people, and sin destroys people.

24. "He that falls into sin is a man. He that grieves at sin is a saint. He that boasts of sin is a devil" -- Thomas Fuller.

CONCLUSION :

1. Along the banks of the Amazon River there lives a species of large, colorful spiders. When one of these spiders spreads itself out, it looks exactly like the blossom of a beautiful flower.

2. Bees and other insects light upon it and expect to find honey, but instead the spider secretes a deadly poison.

3. The poison drugs some of the insects and kills the rest. That is the way sin is. Expecting to find sweet honey, sinners discover that they are being poisoned. Unfortunately, most people discover too late.

4. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:15, 16).