

James 1:12-18

"From Trials To Temptations"

The Word of God offers a ready reminder of the frailty/brevity of life. The life span of man (in the grand scope of things) is as the grass of the field. The grass withers, the flower falls & it's beautiful appearance fades. Here today, gone tomorrow... & It's not that it's wrong to have money... **The warning is to be wise. Don't make it your sole life goal to acquire wealth. Don't put your faith in finances as though riches will assure future security... That's a mindset focused on things that are temporary rather than eternity.**

Listen, there are only 2 things in this life that will enter eternity. One is the Word of God; the other is the people on this planet. & Of the people on this planet, only those of you who've come to believe on the Lord J.C. will go to be w/the Lord & enjoy the fullness of *salvation*. **The rest will experience eternal *separation from God & condemnation in their sin...* That should provoke us to set our sights on J.C. & give out the message of the gospel rather than constantly seeking to simply acquire more money.**

If you're rich, that's ok. Just make sure you're using those resources in some measure to move ministry forward, advancing God's agenda upon the earth. & Thank God for those trials that He allows into your life to remind you to trust in Him rather than in uncertain riches. **If you're poor, don't fret, God has riches in store for you that are out of this world... That's kind of the context that we're coming out of in Vs 9-11, & James has been exhorting us unto the appropriate attitude to have toward trials/tribulations.**

In the section of scripture that's before us today. He segues (transitions), or perhaps broadens his scope to include not only trials/tribulations, but also temptations. He's going to highlight 3 things w/in the context of temptation & that is #1 The *source of* temptation. #2 The *steps in* temptation. #3 The *solution for* temptation.

Vs 12

Probably the most popular place in which we find beatitudes is the 5th Ch of the gospel of Matthew in what we refer to as the Lord's Sermon on the Mt. When He (seeing the multitudes) went up on a Mt & after He was seated, He began to teach them saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." & He expounded to them upon ways in which happiness (blessedness) finds us.

There's a blessing in recognizing the absolute impoverished state of our spirit apart from God. That there's nothing we can do to somehow make our own way to heaven, but that we have to rely completely, totally upon the grace of God through faith in J.C. –

There's a blessing in being broken & mourning over our sin, being humbled *before* the Lord & receiving the comfort of forgiveness *from* the Lord & reconciliation *w/the* Lord.

& Though those are wonderful ways in which we're blessed, Jesus didn't in anyway allude to the fact that those were the *only* ways we could/would be blessed.

W/even just a *little bit* of research, you'll discover these little succinct statements, pathways to blessing (if you will) found in multiple places throughout your Bible. (If you want to write it down you can, but for the sake of time I'll just read it to you. **Ps 1:1-3**) Prov 3:13. **"Happy (Blessed) is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding;"**¹ In Jn 13:17 Jesus spoke of the blessing in serving one another. In Ch 20 He said, "Blessed are those who having not seen Me, believe..." & There are others, but you get the idea.

Here, James shines some light on yet another. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation..." Now: this is why I say that James is beginning to segue into the idea of *temptations* as opposed to *tribulations* at this point. Because the word translated "temptations" here in Vs 12, is the same word translated "trials" back in Vs 2.

So, James is either finishing up his thought from the previous passage, or he's beginning to lean into the struggle of *temptations* as distinguished/differentiated from *tribulation* (the next few Vs making that clear). It's the context that clarifies for us what his meaning behind the word is. Because it can speak to a difficult, trying time (trial) or solicitation to sin (temptation).

& The truth is that it's not uncommon for Satan to take the trial that God is using to strengthen & grow you as an occasion to try & stumble &/or tempt you to sin. You need think no farther than Job. God was proving a tremendous work in Job's life through his trials. But the whole time Satan was using the occasion to *tempt* Job into cursing God & giving up. So; don't be deceived. Satan loves to glom onto the trial that *God* is using & seize the opportunity to tempt you to sin in the midst of it.

So that, you suddenly lose your job, or some relational or financial crisis is thrust upon you. Satan comes along & says, "What's the point? You may as well go drown your miserable existence at the bottom of a bottle..." He's taken advantage of the trial so as to introduce the element of temptation. Do you see how that works?

James says, "Blessed is the man who *endures* temptation..."

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). **(Pr 3:13)**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Who says, “no” to the temptation. Who denies himself/herself, crucifies the flesh, refuses to feed the flesh & stays faithful to God.

Perhaps this would be a good time to note that there’s no blessing offered to the one who “entertains” temptation. Sometimes we like to “skate on thin ice” (as the saying goes). Or “live on the edge”. We seek to sidle up to sin as close as we can w/out actually engaging. No blessedness upon foolishness. We have phrases that speak to that mentality. We say things like, “If you mess w/the bull... you get the horns”. “If you play w/fire... you’re gonna get burned.” Let’s not look to *entertain* temptation. Ultimately, we desire to *escape* temptation. Let’s not forget this precious promise. *“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 We should never *entertain* temptation. It’s our desire to *escape* temptation, but until that time comes, we’re to *endure* temptation. That is, we stay true to God in *spite* of temptation.

The end of that course is blessing. There is a reward attached to the end of faithful endurance. “For when he has been *approved*... (that is found to be true to God, revealing genuine faith toward God) (trials/temptations have a way of displaying how genuine our faith really is), he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has *promised* to those who love Him.”

Well that’s interesting isn’t it? We might expect it to say that the promise (which btw we love that the Lord has *promised it*. God is not a man that He should lie, if He speaks it, He will do it, if He says it, He’ll make it good) is for those who *trust* Him, or *obey* Him. But he doesn’t say that. He says that the Lord has promised of this “crown of life” as the reward for all who endure temptation because they *love* Him.

Meaning that because the *love* the Lord, they stay true to the ways & the word of the Lord. Do you see the connection? Love *for* God is the appropriate motivation for obedience to God. – Obedience *through love* is the nature of a right relationship w/God.

In 1st Jn Ch 5 we read it this way, *“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.”*³

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 10:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Jn 5:1-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In Jn 14 Jesus put it plainly, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments."**⁴ Love for God necessarily leads to & will reveal itself in obedience to God.

Some resist temptation out of the fear of man... The thief suddenly becomes honest when he sees a policeman. But the appropriate, honorable, eternally rewarded motive for resisting temptation is love for God... As Joseph said when Potiphar's wife was seeking to solicit him to sleep w/her. He said, **"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"**⁵ It wasn't the fear of man that kept him pure, it was love for God.

& It's not that you're never going to slip or stumble, it's not that you're never going to sin. But you've got to stay in the race. Falling down (in a race) doesn't disqualify you, staying down (however) does. John said, **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**⁶ What do you do when you fall? When you slip or stumble & sin? You repent, confess your sin to God, get up & get back in the race... (Prov 24:16) There's a reward that awaits you... "The crown of life."

Now this isn't speaking of an ornament that goes on your head or hangs on your wall. (Though I'm open to that, that would be cool. ☺) Think of it like this, "The one who endures temptation will be *crowned with life...*" Life itself is the crown.

Now, everlasting life is the reward of all who love J.C. But somehow & in some way this seems to add a depth, a dimension of life that somehow goes beyond. In other words, will the thief who turned to Jesus on the cross receive the fullness of everlasting life? Absolutely. But will it be fullness to the same depth or degree as say, the apostle Paul? The Bible is clear that rewards will make a difference. Yes, no one will feel let down. Heaven will be fullness of joy for all who are there. But the way the man/woman who believed in Jesus but never really served Him, never really suffered or endured much temptation out of love for Him isn't going to be rewarded in the same way as those who have. Make sense? & Those rewards mean something, they make a difference or what would be the point? The author of Hebrews put it this way, **"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name,"**⁷ God will not be a debtor to you or me. He will make sure that every ounce of service you've rendered, every bit of temptation you've endured, every affliction or persecution you've suffered for His name's sake is duly, justly & abundantly rewarded... (Rom 8:18)

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 14:15-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 39:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Jn 1:8-9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 6:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now, sometimes people get confused. They encounter a trial, along comes the temptation, they find themselves complaining against & questioning the love of God. They blame God for the fact that they're tempted. James addresses this, notice.

Vs 13-16

Do not be deceived. God is not the One who is tempting you. God is only good. God is only holy. He is repulsed *by* sin. He's never going to lead you *toward* sin. He Himself *can't* be tempted nor *does He* tempt anyone. It goes against His very nature.

But it's common for human beings to pass the buck. We don't like to take responsibility for our own faults/fumbles. We like to blame God. Even in the original sin, what did Adam say? *"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."*⁸ He said, "She gave me of the tree so it's her fault, but *You* (God) gave her to me so it's essentially *Your* fault." *My* sin, *my* decision is *Your* fault. God says, "Hold up, let's roll that back."

Family; let's be perfectly clear on this point. God, *does not, will not, in fact cannot* tempt a person to sin. We read in 1st Jn Ch 1 Vs 5, *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."*⁹ *Do you understand what that means? It means there's no "dark side" to God. No mildly twisted desire w/in God, no secret or subtle something w/in Him that wants to bait a trap & see if you'll fall for it.*

In John's gospel, Jesus made an interesting statement. He said, *"...the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."*¹⁰ Meaning there's nothing in Him for Satan to lay hold of by which to tempt Him. *There's no evil, no sin nature in Him. Now, that's not true of you or me. Satan finds plenty to work w/in us. Because we have a sin nature. But God does not, Jesus did not. So He can't be tempted, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

There are 3 things that can be responsible for temptation. #1 The Devil (meaning Satan & his minions), #2 The World (all that is in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh & the pride of life). #3 Me.

& Though the 1st 2 can be the conduit (so to speak) through which my sin nature is enticed. Ultimately it comes down to #3, me. That's what James points out in Vs 14. "Each one is tempted when he is *drawn away by his own desires & enticed.*" Again, the world & the devil may provide the enticement, the incentive, but it's our *own desires* that draw us away.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ge 3:12]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Jn 1:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 14:30]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But we love to pass the buck, don't we? It's always someone else's fault. "The devil made me do it!" I like what J. Vernon McGee said about this. He said, "My friend, you could solve a great deal of your problems for which you are blaming someone else if you would say to the living Lord Jesus who is right now at God's right hand, 'I'm a sinner. I'm guilty.'" Don't blame anyone else. Take responsibility for the decision *you made* to sin.

When James speaks of being drawn away/enticed. Think of a hunting or fishing metaphor. It speaks of laying a trap or baiting a hook to draw the prey out. The lure. A fish isn't going to knowingly bite on a hook, but he's down for an enticing, readily available worm or something... & It's the bait that hides the consequences of sin. Would David have sinned w/Bathsheba had he known it meant the death of a baby, the murder of his friend, the raping of his daughter & disruption/division w/in his family & kingdom? The bait speaks to what you can have, what you can do now, not the destruction it brings later.

Now, Vs 15 makes a distinction for us & it's important. Temptation entices us, our desires draw us away. But notice, "Then when desire has *conceived*, it gives birth to sin." What does that mean? It means that temptation itself isn't sin. But when I gratify the temptation, when I indulge the desire (be it physically or inwardly in my mind/heart), *that's when sin occurs*. When the desire has conceived, the desire has been indulged it gives birth to sin. & When sin grows up it has a child of its own... death. The ultimate result of sin is death. The wages of sin is death.

James says, "Don't be deceived, there's never an exception to the progression." Sin will kill relationships, it will ruin your health, your happiness. Sin brings death & death is separation. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have *separated* you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear."¹¹ This is why confession, & repentance is so important in the life of the believer. Because if we *confess* our sins, He's faithful & just to forgive us our sins & cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 Jn 1:9). Sin makes for separation; repentance makes for *restoration*.

So, let's remember, Satan came to steal, to kill & to destroy. The things he offers you or sets *before* you won't render something good *to* you... & Let's remember, what's the secret to overcoming temptation? I'll mention 3 things. #1 I have to recognize that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells (Rom 7). Satan will seek to appeal to my flesh.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*, (1982). [Is 59:1-2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Nothing good will come from feeding my flesh. #2 I'm to walk in the Spirit. That is set my mind on the things of the Spirit. I'm to feed my inner man through the word, through prayer, through worship & fellowship (all of which are important). #3 Is mentioned back in Vs 12. Our passion & love for God must be greater than our passion & desire for sin.

So... God doesn't tempt you toward evil. There's nothing evil or no dark side in Him. There's only good. & THAT, James says, is what He does *for* you & gives *to* you.

Vs 17-18

Think of it like this. Jesus died *because* of our sin. God gave His only begotten Son to *cleanse* us of sin. Now then, does it stand to reason that He will tempt you *to* sin? No. God gives *good* things to you. Remember this... Satan will never "*give*" you anything. You'll always wind up paying for it in the end...

Again, in me (that is in my flesh) no "good" thing dwells. I can't take credit for the good things in my life. They're gifts from God. Every breath you take is a gift from God. Every beat of your heart is a gift from God. The ability to work, to create, to teach... the meals you eat, the water (or tea ☺) that you drink... The sunshine to enjoy, the green grass. *Whatever, every good & perfect gift comes down from above. From the Father of lights (the Creator of the sun & the stars). What were God's 1st recorded words? "Let there be light..." God is light. Christ in you, the light of the world. "W/whom there is no variation or shadow of turning..."*

You & me we vary. Good days & bad, we can be moody. God's not like that. Doesn't have a bad day, He's never generous one day, grouchy the next... He's faithful & true. The same yesterday, today & forever. ("On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.) **Close**

"Of His own will He brought us forth, by the word of truth..." You've been born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of the will of God." It's God's will that you should be saved. In fact, God's not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. & It's the *Spirit* of God who uses the *Word* God to bring for the miracle of the new birth. Peter put it this way, "*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*"¹² Sin brings forth death. The will of God, through the word of God brings forth everlasting life.

¹² *The New King James Version*, (1982). [1 Pe 1:23]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“That we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” James was speaking to the 1st generation to be saved. Firstfruits were always anticipatory. That’s why they were always offered to God. Because it was an offering in faith expecting a much greater harvest to follow. & Here you are today, testimony to God’s faithfulness to bring forth the harvest.

So, let’s pray & ask God to strengthen us that we might walk in the Spirit & not fulfill the lusts of the flesh that He might be glorified in our lives.

Prayer Points:

Father, forgive us when we try to pass the buck & make excuses for the sin we willingly choose to entertain. Help us to recognize temptation for what it is & love you more than we desire other things. Teach to walk in the Spirit. & Even as You’ve been faithful to grant new life in us, we pray that it be only a 1st fruit (so to speak). We’re asking for a great harvest to follow, that we see many come to know You & grow *in* You this year.

& If that open door applies to you I want to give you that opportunity even now. If you’ve not been forgiven of your sin, if new life hasn’t been brought forth in you through faith in J.C. than today is the day of salvation for you. Don’t harden your heart. Open your heart, turn from your sin & trust in J.C. today who has loved you & given Himself for you upon the cross. He was delivered up for your transgression & raised for your justification.