

James Chapter 1D

How good is your memory? In May of last year, as we were working our way through that wonderful book of Hebrews, we came upon this verse in Chapter 4:

Hebrews 4: 12 **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

- Like a double-edged sword, the Word of God cuts to the very core of our being. It evaluates our motives, discerns our thoughts and helps us to see the true intentions of our hearts.
- While I believe that all Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof and for correction, the verses that we will be studying together this morning are especially sharp.
- Like breaking out a new razor to shave my head, we need to be very careful how we handle the sword of God's word.

Remember the overall theme of James Chapter 1 is the trials that each and every one of us face along this pilgrim's journey. We have already learned that we should consider it pure joy whenever we face trials of every kind.

- This morning we are going to learn how to handle the temptations that always seem to accompany those trials when they come into our lives.

Let's ask the Lord to pierce our hearts with his divine truth this morning. **PRAY**

I would like you to take a moment and think about all of the different trials that you encountered in the past week or two. I want you to see that the trials we face come fully equipped with a variety of temptations.

- Maybe you experienced an extraordinary amount of pressure on the job, and that pressure produced a temptation to lie. IN the corporate world, we call that, "Covering our Butt" Maybe you were tempted to lie about your performance or exaggerate your efforts. Maybe you were tempted to blame a co-worker for a mistake that you know you made.
- You may have faced temptations at home. Strife / Arguments with your spouse A series of relational struggles in your marriage has tempted you to reach out to an old friend, an old flame on Facebook? You might justify yourself by saying that you were just looking for someone to talk to.
- Maybe the financial difficulties that you are currently facing have tempted you lie on your taxes in order to get a larger refund?
- YOU see the trials that we encounter in this life tend to bring along with them a coordinating temptation.

Douglass J. Moo, in his commentary on the book of James writes: “Every trial, every external difficulty, carries with it a temptation, an inner enticement to sin. God may bring or allow trials, but he is not, James insists, the author of temptation. Enticement to sin comes from our own sinful natures, not from God.”

In his first letter to the church at Corinth the Apostle Paul makes it very clear that temptation is something that is “**Common to man.**” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

- Everyone, even the most spiritual person that you know faces temptation on a regular basis.

Even the Lord Jesus, who lived a perfect life, when he walked among men was tested by the Devil. (Matthew 4:1)

As common as it is for all people to face temptation, it is just as common for them to blame someone else when they give in to those temptations. (*You know this*)

- From the very beginning of time, from the day when Adam fell into sin it has been our practice as human beings to blame someone else for our sin.
- Eve blamed the serpent.
- Adam, in his fallen state blamed God. "**The woman whom YOU gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.**"
- Flip Wilson (1970's) made a living saying: ‘The Devil made me do it!’

Even today, men and women seek to blame someone for the devastating events that come into their lives and very often, out of anger, despair or ignorance they end up blaming God.

- A tragic accident has taken the life of a beloved child or grandchild.
- A devastating illness unexpectedly overtakes a faithful spouse.
- Motorcycle accident kills a local pastor leaving his church in shock.
- Where was God when this happened? How could a loving God allow this to happen to me? WHY GOD! I don't understand.

These and many more, unexplainable trials always seem to raise questions in the minds of men concerning the character of God. Let me ask you this:

- Where can we learn the true character of God? Where can we gain understanding for those times tragedies come? We run to the Word of God.

Today James will help us understand the connection between trials and temptation and he will assist us in recognizing how the process of temptation works in all of our lives.

Here is our outline for James 1:13-17. We are going to study:

1. The Nature of God
2. The Nature of Man
3. The Nature of Desire

4. The Nature of God (again so you don't miss the point)

1. The Nature of God.

James understands that the testing of our faith can be viewed in one of two ways:

- We can see it as a trial, (Verses 2-4) trials are uniquely designed for our good. At any time in the course of the trial, we can ask God for wisdom, knowing that he will give it freely to everyone who asks in faith without doubting.
- On the other hand, we could see the same test as a tragedy, a senseless accident that reveals a flaw or failure on God's part to love and protect us as we think He ought.

As I said earlier "Every trial carries with it a temptation, an inner enticement to sin." James is going to help us understand where that enticement comes from and how to recognize it. The first question he answers is this:

"Is God really the source of our temptations?"

James answers that question saying:

James 1: 13 **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.**

I like the New Jerusalem Bible translation of verse 13. It captures the tone of James' command: (This is an imperative (command) not an indicative)

James 1:13, **Never, when you are being put to the test, say, "God is tempting me," God cannot be tempted by evil, and He does not put anybody to the test."**

What must be understood here is that temptation is an impulse to sin and because we still dwell in this fallen flesh, we deal with that impulse all the time.

- James reminds us that God by his very essence, according to his essential nature is "Good." SO He is not susceptible to any such desire for evil, NOR can he be seen as desiring that evil should be brought forth in a man.
- In simple terms you might say, "God is untouched by evil." In His perfect Holiness God does not possess the capacity for temptation.
- You know me, I am not really into Christian "Catch Phrases" but this one seems to fit the context: "God is Good all the time and all the time God is good."

When the rich young ruler addressed the Lord Jesus as "Good Master" or "Good teacher" Jesus responded:

Mark 10:18 **"Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.**

- God alone possesses a nature of perfect goodness. We see that throughout Bible

Psalm 100: 5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 106: 1 Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 34: 8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

- It is very important that we understand, when God allows trials to enter our lives He has NO ill intent, no devious scheme in mind. The trials we face are for our GOOD.

God tested Abraham.

Genesis 22: 1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

- God gave Abraham an opportunity to demonstrate the authenticity of his faith and Abraham trusted the Lord believing that if were necessary God would raise Isaac from the dead.

God also tested the People of Israel:

Exodus 16: 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

- God instructed Israel to gather only the manna they would need for one day but as you might expect some of them were greedy and had to learn the hard way.
- The testing of Israel revealed a flaw, not in God but in the people of Israel.
- Rather than trust and obey they rebelled and fell in the wilderness.

So what have we learned? God is GOOD! He cannot be tempted with evil NOR does he tempt anyone with evil.

- SO What is the source of our temptation?
- The problem is not in the nature of God, the problem is the nature of man.

2 The Nature of Man

James 1: 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

- The origin of temptation lies deep within the nature of fallen man.

Comic Strip POGO – “We have met the enemy and He is US!”

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Scottish Presbyterian Pastor in a candid moment said, “*I have discovered that the seed of every known sin dwells in my heart.*”

When James says, “**Each person**” He speaks of the universality of temptation showing that no one is immune to its craft and subtlety. Every human being experiences temptation and there are no exceptions.

- The present tense “**is tempted**” underscores the continual, repeated process of temptation that James is describing.

Each person is tempted when “**By His Own Desire**” his own craving, his own intense longing, his own lust, He is lured away and enticed.

- The wording, used here shows us there is a unique characteristic within every individual concerning the desires that lead him into sin. Allow me to explain.

You can take one individual into every retail store in King of Prussia and the thought of shoplifting would never cross their mind. It doesn't matter how many guards are on the doors, or what type of merchandise is on display. He simply is not tempted to steal.

- But there are other people who walk into a store and they wrestle in their mind with the temptation to take everything they see. They scan the store for security. They watch for inattentive sales people to turn their back.

BUT that same person who is never tempted by material possessions has to have filters and accountability software on their personal computer to keep them from viewing pornographic images on the web.

- Every time they hit the “enter” button to log in they are tempted to visit sites that will arouse their passions.
- The problem lies within the sinful flesh of every man. How does it work?

James 1: 14 **But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire**
Each individual is tempted when he is “Lured and Enticed” by his own desire.

- The words Lured and Enticed come from the world of hunting and fishing.

A successful angler knows what kind of fish he is trying to catch and he picks out the specific type of lure that will capture the attention of his desired prey.

- I am not a fisherman, nor do I have an interest in becoming one, I read this
- A Trout fishermen will use some kind of flies to lure a trout into his net.
- A knowledgeable fisherman will use a spinner to catch a Small Mouth Bass
- If he is seeking to capture a large mouth bass he might use a plastic worm.

IN the Same Way, Advertisers go fishing w/ bait: Twin bathtubs in a romantic setting, Pop up ads for 50% off at Macys, Single women that want to meet you!

The shiny, twirly, colorful Lure captures the attention of the fish. BUT it is the appetite that abides deep within the fish that causes it to bite the hook.

- The lure is nothing more than a piece of plastic, a hammered metal it has no moral or spiritual value whatsoever.

- The temptation comes from within the fish itself. It is driven by an all-consuming appetite to possess the object of its desire.
- Time and again that same fish will take the bait, time and again he will be snagged by the hook on the end of the fisherman's line.
- Why does that fish keep going back to the same LURE?
- You may ask yourself, "Why do I keep yielding to the same temptation?"

Romans 7: 14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

- Without doubt, the problem lies within US.

What have we learned? God does not tempt us, He is HOLY! Temptation comes from within our own fallen fleshly nature. Now let's see where this nature lead us.

3 The Nature of Desire

James could have continued his fishing metaphor by following that lustful fish from the hook to the net, then from the net to the cooler and finally to the kitchen table where he is methodically decapitated, descaled and put to death. BUT James chooses to employ a different illustration. Possibly for the sake of the women in the congregation who may not relate to fishing. James says:

James 1: 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The metaphor that James employs here comes from the process of childbirth.

- Here Lust is depicted, as a mother who conceives in her womb and bears a child, that child of course represents Sin and the ultimate destiny when the child is fully grown is death.
- You have heard of the circle of life, Right? James uses the circle of life to help us understand the circle of temptation.
- It is important that we understand that James is describing a Process. It is the process whereby temptation moves our emotions, to manipulate our minds, it motivates our will and results in mutiny against the Law of God which in turn leads to mortality.
 1. Temptation begins primarily as an emotion, a feeling, a longing for something that may begin in the subconscious. But after arousing our interest it grows stronger and stronger. Eventually our emotions and our thoughts become consumed with the object of our desire.

2. Then that same object begins to manipulate our mind. We begin to rationalize our desire and justify our strong emotions. After sufficient meditation and rationalization, the desire moves from the mind to the will.
3. The will is the place in the inner man where thoughts are turned into action. This is where plans, schemes and designs are made; this is where the final decision to pursue our desires takes place.
4. When lust successfully passes through the will it moves from the inside of a man to the outside of man. What began as a thought has turned to action. Intention has become infraction, Desire and Design have degenerated to full disobedience.

Let's go back to the metaphor of conception and childbirth for a moment:

- We understand that a fetus is a legitimate human being even while it remains in the womb. Before a baby takes its first breath, it is a human being.
- SO ALSO when desire is conceived it becomes sin even before that desire becomes an action. While it is being formed in the will of man.

Matthew 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- It is not only the outward act of immorality that is considered the sin of adultery. God considers it to be sin while it is still in the heart. And while there is certainly a greater punishment for the one who acts. All sin leads to death.

Romans 3:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- With this mention of the free gift of God we come full circle back to the revealed nature of God.
- SO that we don't walk away depressed and dejected, condemned by the reality of our struggle with temptation, James brings us back to the Nature of God.
- Our Hope is in the goodness of God and in the gracious gifts that He Lavishes upon his people.

4 Here in Verse 17 we come full circle, Back to the Nature of God.

James 1: 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

God is the author, He is the source and the substance of all that is good and every perfect gift that comes into our lives comes from Him.

- We find the listing of those gifts recorded for us in the Epistles,
 - Gifts of regeneration, (new life) The Gift of righteousness, the gift of the forgiveness of sins, adoption into the family of God, and of course the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

- All of these and so many more have their source in God alone.

James calls God the Father of lights – the creator of the sun, moon and every stars the giver of divine light, that spiritual illumination which opens the eyes of the blind and gives life to those who were dead in sin.

And He is unlike US in this way: there is no variation or shadow due to change.

- His goodness doesn't change with his moods.
- He isn't up one day and down the next.

We will deal more thoroughly with this verse next week but for today, I want to leave you with this. Despite our many failures. God has given us all that we need for life and godliness in Christ Jesus.

- If our study in James has served to bring conviction into your life.
- If the Holy Spirit has uncovered an area of temptation that plagues your life. If you are that fish, the one who keeps falling for the same lure.
- Hear the words of the Apostle John.

1 John 2: 1 **My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**

- If you are In Christ this morning. If you have repented of your sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, there is one who stands in your defense.
- The righteous one, the one who lived a perfect life and died on the cross.
- HE is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is effective in building a “No Fishing” sign in your soul.