

Looking for God When Tempted

James 1:13-15

The LA Olympics of 1984 were incredible. Los Angeles was over run with the world. Everywhere could be heard the languages of every corner of the globe. In the midst of all the excitement was the Torch. Looking for the Torch was a real passion for many. As it wound its way by relay across Southern California and finally across the city it was common to see crowds straining to catch a sight as they followed and looked for it.

The book of James was a letter written 19 ½ centuries ago. The second key to overcoming temptation is our study this morning: LOOK FOR GOD when temptations come!

Look at our text this morning: James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. NKJV. There are four powerful truths tucked away in these verses:

- **TEMPTATION IS INEVITABLE** "Let no one say when he is tempted" it isn't if but when!
- **GOD IS IMMUTABLE** "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone"
- **LUST IS AVOIDABLE** ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed
- **SIN IS HORRIBLE** ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death

TEMPTATION IS INEVITABLE

That is no God's plan. Instead His Word gives us the way out. There are three keys to help us unlock the door every time we feel we are trapped in temptation.

USE THE WORD

The first key: quote Scripture like Jesus! Read in Mt. 4:1-11 **Use the Word** (that's what Christ did). He planned and prepared. Note the 1st word Christ spoke "Man shall not . . ." this is an insight into the most powerful truth in this passage: JESUS MET AND MASTERED SATAN AS A MAN! He did not face him as gGod'sSon, that would not have

been a match. Jesus met Satan with the same two, and the only two resources we have – the Word of God and the Spirit of God. If the Word of God is hidden in our hearts:

- we will say with the Psalmist (119:9-11) How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! 11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! (NKJV)
- we will say with Paul in Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. NKJV
- we will say with John (1 John 5:18) We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. NKJV
- we listen to Jesus who said (Revelation 1:5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, NKJV

So Jesus did not zap Satan with His deity, He flattened him with totally obedient humanity. Now we know Jesus had no evil desires Satan could attach to (John 14:30) "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. NKJV. But the real battleground of the devil is our will. Jesus had already proclaimed His life's direction as **DOING THE WILL OF** God and not his own (Hebrews 10:7-9) Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.' " 8 Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. NKJV. Doing God's will is another way of saying Walk in the Spirit.

LOOK FOR GOD

I Corinthians 10:13 LOOK FOR GOD - He's there. The apostle Paul gives us hope in this verse of Scripture. 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.

The longer you meditate on this verse, the bigger the shadow looming over it becomes. It is God who towers over this passage: *God is there all the time.* He tells us He is faithful. When we think we are alone, we are not alone. God has already measured and limited the attack upon us. He has already provided an escape route if we will only look for it and take it. If it were just us facing temptation, we would be hopelessly defeated. But God knows that already and so He is there. All the time. All the way. Every time. And He has the best way out marked for us. What a Mighty God we serve!

A father once told of his son's first serious conflict at school. His boy was being picked on by two or three bullies. They punched the youngster a time or two, pushed him over when he was riding his bike home from school, and generally made life miserable for the lad. They told him they would meet him the next morning and beat him up.

That evening the dad really worked with the boy at home. He showed him how to defend himself, passed along a few helpful techniques, and even gave him some tips on how he might try to win them over as friends. The next morning the lad and dad prayed together knowing that the inevitable was sure to happen. With a reassuring embrace and a firm handshake, the father smiled confidently and said, "You can do it, Son. I know you'll make out all right."

Choking back the tears, the boy got on his bike and began the lonely, long ride to school. What the boy did not know was that every block he rode he was under the watchful eye of his dad...who drove his car a safe distance from his son, out of sight but ever ready to speed up and assist if the scene became too threatening. The boy thought he was alone, but he wasn't at all. The father was there all the time.

And in even greater measure, the God of the Universe has gone ahead. He has been tempted in every way like us and triumphed. He has joined us in every temptation and makes the way of victory marked and open for us. Look for God ! He is always faithful!

Where should we look for God?

1. We need to look for God when we are on **THE MOUNTAIN OF DESPAIR** like Abraham. When we do we find **GOD SUPPLIES ME**. Genesis 22:1-14
2. We need to look for God when we are in **THE DEN OF PASSION** like Joseph. When we do we find **GOD SEES ME**. Genesis 39:1-9
3. We need to look for God when we are in **THE CAVE OF FEAR** like David. When we do we find **GOD SUPPORTS ME**. Psalm 142; 56
4. We need to look for God when we are in **THE SPOTLIGHT OF PRIDE** like Daniel. When we do we find **GOD SENDS ME**. Daniel 2:24-28
5. We need to look for God when we **ARE SINKING IN THE FURY OF THE STORM** like Peter. When we do we find **GOD SAVES ME**. Matthew 14:24-31
6. We need to look for God when we are in **THE GRIP OF PAIN** like Paul. When we do we find **GOD IS SUFFICIENT FOR ME**. II Corinthians 12:7-10
7. We need to look for God when we are in **THE GLOOM OF FAILURE** like Jeremiah. When we do we find **GOD IS SHAPING ME**. Jeremiah 18:1-6

Jeremiah's woes were unimaginable to our relatively peaceful lives. He lived through the death throes of the nation of Judah. In his lifetime he saw the decay of God's chosen people, the horrible destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the nation to Babylon. He preached for 40 years and saw no visible result among those he served. Instead

- those countrymen he warned for God sought to kill him if he wouldn't stop preaching doom (Jer. 11:19-23);
- his own family and friends were involved in plots against his (12:60);
- God never allowed him to marry, and thus he suffered incredibly agonizing loneliness (16:20);
- there were plots to kill him in secret so no one would find him (18:20-23);
- he was beaten severely and then bound in wooden stocks (20:1-2);
- his friends spied on him deceitfully and for revenge (20:10);

- he was consumed with sorrow and shame and even cursed the day he was born (20:14-18);
- finally, falsely accused of being a traitor to his own country (37:13-14), Jeremiah was arrested, beaten, thrown into a dungeon, and starved many days (37:15-21). If an Ethiopian Gentile had not interceded on his behalf he would have died there. In the end, tradition tells us he was exiled to Egypt, where he was stoned to death by his own people. He had virtually no converts to show for a lifetime of ministry.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this book is the fact that despite the terrible woes of the life Jeremiah was called to (1:5), he saw that it was all at the Master Potter's Hand (18:1-6). At the point of near despair over his failed ministry, God asked Jeremiah to go to the Potter's house and there he would get a message from the Lord (18:2). Although Israel had failed so grievously, the heavenly Potter was able to bless them again if they would but repent and yield to his Perfect Touch.

As Jeremiah entered the potter's house the sight was vivid in its spiritual application.

- The wheel revolved at the command of the potter's foot;
- the clay lay piled in a pot, useless and of no value;
- close at hand was the water in a pot to be worked into the clay to soften and make it malleable;
- off to the side was the scrap pile where the unyielding clay that would not conform to the potter's hands and failed to fulfill his design was cast;
- and then in the midst of all that was the quiet and skillful potter himself busily fashioning another work of art upon the wheel.

Listen to the Word, Jeremiah 18:5-6 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 6 "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. (NASB).

THE VESSEL SHAPED When we think of the portrait of God as the Absolute Sovereign it seems harsh and forbidding. Isaiah gives us an insight that softens the picture

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, We are the clay, and Thou our potter; And all of us are the work of Thy hand. (NASB).

Although God is the Sovereign Potter He is also the Loving Father. His shaping is always with love and tenderness. God is absolutely skilled in the shaping of human lives.

- He does not experiment, He is omniscient.
- He makes no mistakes, He is omnipotent.
- His work is never spoiled by neglect, He is omnipresent.

It is only when we try to assume His role as Potter in our own lives or others that the clay is marred.

The wheel of our Heavenly Potter molding our lives represents the circumstances and events that make up each day. Our response to each event God sends to us shapes our character. The clay of our life was chosen by God, so we must not question our heredity,

temperament and place in life. But through the providential dealings - the sorrows and joys, the prosperity and adversity, the trials and temptations, the blessings and bereavements of our Lord we are shaped.

THE VESSEL MARRED Jeremiah 18:4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter. . . (NASB). As Jeremiah watches the clay collapses on the wheel. No potter purposely causes an object to fail. It is a deficiency in the clay and its response to the potter's touch. Sin of any kind mars the vessel God is making us into. Be it a resistance of His will or a wrong relationship or attitude, all bad clay must be disposed of or the shaping ends. So in our life God takes away as we yield to His Spirit, all that hides the beauty of Christ in us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (NASB)

THE VESSEL RESHAPED Jeremiah 18:4b . . . so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. (NASB). What hope comes as we see the potter softening and reworking the clay. Here is the blessed message of hope God offers.

- He doesn't throw us away, He reshapes.
- God is the God of the second chance as Peter the denier, Jacob the deceiver, Abraham the liar, Paul the murderer and John Mark the quitter would testify.
- The Scriptures are full of the testimonies of those that submit to the Potter and are shaped into vessels fit for His use.

#428 I need Thee

#430 I must tell Jesus

#330 "Come Every Soul By Sin Oppressed"