

Drawn Away of Our Own Lust
James 1:14-15

James 1:14-15 reads, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

As we have previously noted, **James 1:12-18** gives counsel concerning a right motivation for endurance in godliness, concerning a right attitude toward the Lord our God, and concerning a right understanding of temptation unto sin. Overall, this subject matter is arranged in order to move our focus and understanding from the outside toward the center. Thus **verse 12 & verses 17-18** give counsel concerning our right motivation for endurance in godliness. Then **verse 13 & verses 16-17** give counsel concerning our right attitude toward the Lord our God. Finally, **verses 14-15** give counsel concerning our right understanding of temptation to sin.

Verse 14 begins with the adversative conjunction “but,” providing a direct contrast to the truth of **verse 13**. The closing portion of **verse 13** proclaims the truth, “For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” Indeed, our all-holy Lord God is never the cause of our sinful temptation, either directly or even distantly through our personal constitution, relational contacts, or individual circumstances. So then, who or what is the cause of our sinful temptation? In contrast to the truth of **verse 13**, **verse 14** gives answer, saying, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

Grammatically, **James 1:14-15** presents three statements that reveal a three-step process whereby sinful temptation and sinful behavior take hold upon our hearts and lives. Each of these three statements contains the relative conjunction “when,” revealing a conditional truth that *when* a certain event occurs, then a certain result will arise. First, **verse 14** presents the character of sinful temptation -- “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” Second, the opening portion of **verse 15** presents the conception of selfish desire -- “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” Third, the closing portion of **verse 15** presents the consequence of sinful behavior -- “And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Through these three statements, we may observe seven progressive elements in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior. However, before we focus our attention upon these seven elements, we should consider three introductory and foundational truths to this subject matter. The first foundational truth is that sinful temptation is a *universal* matter. The opening line of **James 1:14** states, “But every man is tempted.” In like manner, the opening portion of **1 Corinthians 10:13** states, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” Each and every one of us is tempted unto sin, and is tempted on a regular basis. Sinful temptation is a characteristic element of our lives upon this earth. The second foundational truth is that sinful fault is a *personal* matter. **James 1:14** continues, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” Each and every one of us is tempted of our own, personal lust (that is -- of our own, selfish desire). Therefore, each and every commission of sin, whether in attitude, word, action, or neglect, is our own, personal fault and responsibility. The

third foundational truth is that sinful behavior is a *consequential* matter. **James 1:15** declares, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Yielding to sinful desire always results in destructive consequences. Whenever we consent in our heart to be drawn away from our Lord’s fellowship and to be enticed by sin’s deceptive pleasures, sin will be the consequence in some form. Furthermore, whenever we commit sin in some form, death will be the consequence in some manner.

So then, having considered these three foundational truths to this matter, we now come to the seven progressive elements in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior.

I. The Element of *Desire*.

The first element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *desire*. **James 1:14** reveals that each and every one of us is tempted unto sin, each and every time of temptation, when we are drawn away and enticed *of our own lust*. In this context the word “lust” does not have a narrow reference only to sexual matters. Rather, in this context the word “lust” refers to any selfish desire of our hearts. This selfish desire may include the pursuit of something that is wrong or the neglect of something that is right. It may even include an involvement in something that is morally neutral, or even morally good, but that is rooted to selfish motivation. Thus **Proverbs 21:4** defines “the plowing of the wicked” as sin. The definite source and direct agent of sinful temptation is *the principle of selfishness* in our hearts. It is by this principle of selfishness that we choose our own will over our Lord’s will, and it is by this principle of selfishness that we behave in a self-centered manner toward others.

Certainly, our spiritual adversary the devil is called “the tempter” in God’s Word (1 Thesalonians 3:5). Certainly, the devil does employ his deceptive wiles against us in order to tempt us unto disobedience and rebellion against our Lord. Yet the devil’s temptations can only find a place to take root in our hearts through our own selfish desires. Indeed, the occasion for sinful temptation may come through our personal constitution, relational contacts, or individual circumstances. Yet the *inclination* toward sinful temptation is rooted in our own selfish desire. The true source of sinful temptation is not from outside ourselves, but from inside our selfish, sinful hearts. The true source is not Satan’s deception from without, but our own selfish desire from within. Thus the responsibility for any sinful fault in our lives is our own, rooted to our own selfish desire. As God’s own children, granted newness of spiritual life and indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, we are able to resist temptation and refuse unrighteousness. Therefore, when we commit sin in any manner, it is our own selfish choice through our own selfish desire.

Even so, the closing line of **1 Peter 1:4** reveals that the spiritual corruption of this world is “in the world through lust” (that is -- through the selfish desires of mankind). Furthermore, **Ephesians 2:3** indicates concerning our spiritual condition as lost sinners before salvation, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts [in the selfish desires] of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Therefore, **Ephesians 4:22** instructs us who are now God’s children through faith in Christ as Savior, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [according to the

deceitful desires of selfishness].” Again **1 Peter 1:14-15** gives the instruction, “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts [according to the former desires of selfishness] in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Indeed, our selfish desires stand in direct contrast to the way of holiness. **1 John 2:16** reveals that the very essence of worldliness is selfish desire, saying, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Those who rebel against the Lord do so in “walking after their own lusts,” in walking after their own selfish desires (**2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:16, 18**). Yea, **2 Timothy 4:3-4** warns us concerning the spiritual backsliding of God’s own people, saying, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts [after their own selfish desires] shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” If we give ourselves to walk after our own selfish desires, we shall depart from the wisdom and ways of God’s holy Word.

Brethren, sinful temptation and sinful behavior begin with the selfish desires of our hearts. If we would obtain spiritual victory over it, we must confront it and resist it at this point. Thus **1 Peter 2:11** gives the instruction, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” We must not indulge the selfish thoughts and feelings, intents and motivations of our hearts. Rather, we must deny these selfish thoughts and feelings, these selfish intents and motivations. Even so, **Titus 2:11-12** declares, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts [the ungodly and worldly desires of selfishness], we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” If we would walk in daily fellowship with our Lord, we must deny our selfish desires, take up our cross of self-sacrificing submission unto our Lord, and follow Him in whole-hearted dependence and obedience (**Luke 9:23**). Through utter dependence upon the power of our Lord’s might (**Ephesians 6:10**), we must not allow sin to reign in our hearts and lives by yielding in obedience to its selfish desires (**Romans 6:12**). Rather, we must walk after the direction of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, in order that we should not fulfill the selfish desire of our sinful flesh (**Galatians 5:16**). We must put on our Lord Jesus Christ through abiding in Him, and must not make any provision whatsoever for our sinful flesh to fulfill the selfish desires thereof (**Romans 13:14**).

II. The Element of *Drawing Away*.

The second element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *drawing away*. **James 1:14** reveals that each and every one of us is tempted unto sin when we are *drawn away* of our own selfish desires. Here the Greek word translated “drawn away” was often employed in the context of hunting and fishing, wherein the prey was drawn away from some position of safety. This is the manner by which sinful temptation begins to take root in our hearts. Through our own selfish desires, we are drawn away from the place of spiritual safety. We are drawn away from the blessed fellowship of our Lord, from the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit, from the governing truth of God’s Word, and from a focused pursuit after righteousness. Through our own selfish desires, an intense draw is placed upon our will to move away from our Lord and His righteousness and to move toward sinful behavior in attitude, word, or action. Thus we must guard the focus of our

hearts “with all diligence,” for out of the heart “are the issues of life” (**Proverbs 4:23**). We must establish the focus of our hearts upon our Lord, ever abiding in His fellowship and strength, upon the Holy Spirit, ever walking after His guidance, upon God’s Word, ever meditating upon its truth and being governed by its principles, and upon the way of righteousness, ever motivated to please the Lord our God thereby.

III. The Element of *Deception*.

The third element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *deception*. **James 1:14** reveals that each and every one of us is tempted when we are both drawn away and *enticed* of our own selfish desires. Here the Greek word translated “enticed” presents the picture of luring with bait, as on a hook or for a trap. It portrays some bait that offers a form of pleasure to the prey, and thereby deceives the prey into being caught by the hook or trap. This is the manner by which sinful temptation takes hold within our hearts. Through our own selfish desires, sinful temptation attracts us and allures us by deceptively convincing us that a given sin is pleasurable and profitable for us. In this manner Eve was deceived into eating of the forbidden tree. **Genesis 3:6** states, “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” Sinful temptation appeals to our selfish desires, inviting us “to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (**Hebrews 11:25**).

Every sinful temptation engages us with great cunning and deception. It offers profit and pleasure for self, while hiding the hook and the trap behind that self-pleasure and self-profit. It does this to distract us from considering the final consequences of yielding to that sinful temptation. It does this to move us to disregard, discount, or even discredit the cost of yielding. It does this to convince us that enjoying the pleasure of the sin is worth any cost that might possibly be required. It does this to motivate us to rationalize, trivialize, and even justify yielding to the temptation. This is the deceptive nature of sinful temptation. Yet sinful temptation only has an attraction and allure to our hearts through our own selfish desires, because our sinful flesh views a walk in sin more appealing than a walk with our Lord. Even so, **James 1:14** presents the elements of drawing away and deception as two closely related parts of the same process. We are drawn away from our Lord *through* the deceptive pleasures of sin, and we are made more susceptible to the deceptive pleasures of sin *as* we are drawn away from our Lord.

Therefore, we must ponder the path and consequences of our decisions and direction, and must let all our ways be established in the fellowship and righteousness of our Lord (**Proverbs 4:26**). We must steadfastly flee that which is sinful and follow after that which is righteous. We must not allow our hearts to be drawn away from our Lord and to be enticed by sinful pleasures. We must especially be on guard against the selfish desires that are individually our own. One type of bait does not work equally well with every type of prey. Even so, we each are most spiritually vulnerable through the deceptive pleasures that appeal to our *own* selfish desires. Thus we each must be most concerned to guard against our *own* areas of spiritual weakness.

IV. The Element of *Decision*.

The fourth element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *decision*. The opening line of **James 1:15** states, “Then when lust hath conceived.” Through our own selfish desires, sinful temptation draws away and entices our will. Sinful temptation upon our selfish desire calls for a decision. Either we will decide to resist faithfully, or we will decide to yield willfully. Even so, when our will embraces and joins in union with a given desire of our selfish, sinful heart, a decision is made in our heart and mind in favor of sin. This is the moment at which our hearts and minds willfully yield to the sinful temptation. This is the moment at which our hearts and minds willfully conceive the decision to partake of the deceptive pleasure offered through sinful temptation. This is the moment at which we willfully decide to approve of the appeal to our selfish desire. This is the moment at which we willfully decide to pursue and satisfy our selfish desire.

V. The Element of *Disobedience*.

The fifth element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *disobedience*. The opening half of **James 1:15** continues, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” This is the certain consequence of our willful decision to yield unto the sinful temptation. Whenever our selfish desire and our will join in union, sinful disobedience is the offspring. Then our own selfish desire will give birth and bring forth sin and disobedience against the Lord our God, either in attitude, word, or action. Indeed, our selfish desire is the mother of sinful disobedience. Sinful temptation itself is not sin. Even our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted, “yet without sin” (**Hebrews 4:15**). Our responsibility is to resist and flee sinful temptation. Yet when we join our will with our selfish desire and indulge sinful temptation, then sinful disobedience will be the inevitable result. Then we will depart from the path of righteousness and will enter into the path of unrighteousness. Selfish desire leads through drawing away and deception unto decision; and if a sinful decision is made, that decision leads inevitably unto sinful disobedience. In this manner, we ourselves willfully choose to turn away from our Lord and His righteous will and to commit sinful disobedience against our Lord and His will. Indeed, the selfish desire is our own; the sinful decision is our own; and the sinful disobedience is our own. Therefore, the battle against sinful temptation and sinful behavior must begin with our own selfish desires in the thoughts and feelings, intents and motivations of our hearts. We must cast down “imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God;” and we must bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (**2 Corinthians 10:5**).

VI. The Element of *Development*.

The sixth element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *development*. The closing portion of **James 1:15** begins, “And sin, when it is finished.” In this context the word “finished” refers to that which has become fully developed. Every sin that we commit produces a work of spiritual corruption within our hearts and upon our lives. When we sow to our selfish, sinful flesh through sinful disobedience, we shall reap spiritual corruption (**Galatians 6:7-8**). Even after the sinful act itself is over, the work of spiritual corruption continues its development within and upon us. Each commission of sin

spiritually hardens our hearts, spiritually darkens our thoughts and feelings, and spiritually corrupts our intents and motivations. Thus each time that we yield to temptation, spiritual corruption develops deeper roots in our hearts and makes us more susceptible to repeat the sin in the future. Then as we repeat the sinful behavior, a sinful habit develops in our lives and eventually becomes an integral part of our character. In this manner we become bound with the cords and chains of our own sins (**Proverbs 5:22**). Having been conceived through decision and having been born through disobedience, the sin then grows in a corruptive development. This corruptive development can only be stopped and put to death through brokenhearted repentance unto the Lord our God.

VII. The Element of *Destruction and Death*.

The seventh and final element in the realm of sinful temptation and sinful behavior is that of *destruction and death*. The closing portion of **James 1:15** continues, “And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” This consequence of death is in direct contrast to “the crown of life” that our Lord shall give as a reward unto those who faithfully endure the trials of life through a righteous walk. This is the absolute principle of God’s Word. The final consequence of sin is *always* destruction and death in some form. “For the wages of sin is death” (**Romans 6:23**). By the first sin of Adam, death entered the world (**Romans 5:12**). Indeed, death has passed upon every one of us because we all have sinned. In fact, we all enter this world as sinners by nature; and as such, we enter this world already dead spiritually in trespasses and sins (**Ephesians 2:1**). Furthermore, every lost sinner who dies in his or her sin “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (**Revelation 21:8**).

Yet every individual who places his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as eternal Savior “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (**John 5:24**). Yea, every believer is born again as a child of God, given newness of spiritual life through the work of God the Holy Spirit. As the children of God, we are no longer dead spiritually in sins, but are now alive spiritually unto God through Christ. We possess the life of God within and can never again become completely dead spiritually in sins. Yet even as the children of God, we can experience a spiritual deadness in our hearts and lives. We can experience spiritual withering, spiritual fruitlessness, spiritual uselessness, spiritual emptiness, spiritual blindness, and spiritual defeat. This spiritual deadness is the consequence of our walk in sin. Even so, in **John 15:6** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the warning unto His own, saying, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned [under the chastening hand of our Lord].” Again **Romans 8:13** gives the warning to us who are God’s own children, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Yet again **Galatians 6:8** gives the warning, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” And yet again **2 Peter 1:9** gives the warning, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Furthermore, if we continue unrepentant in our walk of sin, our Lord may chasten us with physical death; for “there is a sin unto death” even for God’s own children (**1 John 5:16**).

Brethren, all of this truth is given unto us for our admonition. It is given to warn us against any and all selfish desire and sinful temptation, and to motivate us unto diligent, faithful resistance against such desires and temptations. Let us not indulge these selfish desires and sinful temptations even for a moment, lest they become rooted in our character, bind us in their power, and bring us to corruption and destruction. This admonition is also given to warn us and motivate us concerning any sin that we have already committed, that we might quickly recognize our own fault in committing that sin, repent of that sin with a broken and contrite heart, and return unto our Lord and our walk in His fellowship. The Lord our God finds no pleasure in our destruction and death. Rather, He desires that we should turn from our sinful ways and live. Thus He calls unto us in love, saying, “Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways” (**Ezekiel 33:11**); and again, saying, “Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (**Ezekiel 18:32**).