

## James 1:13-18

### HOW TO HANDLE TEMPTATION

#### Introduction:

The mature person is patient in trials. Sometimes the trials are testings on the outside, and sometimes they are temptations on the inside. Trials may be tests sent by God, or they may be temptations sent by Satan and encouraged by our own fallen nature. It is this second aspect of trials—temptations on the inside—that James dealt with in this section.

We may ask, “Why did James connect the two? What is the relationship between testings without and temptations within?” Simply this: if we are not careful, the testings on the outside may become temptations on the inside. When our circumstances are difficult, we may find ourselves complaining against God, questioning His love, and resisting His will. At this point, Satan provides us with an opportunity to escape the difficulty. This opportunity is a temptation.

There are many illustrations of this truth found in the Bible. Abraham arrived in Canaan and discovered a famine there. He was not able to care for his flocks and herds. This trial was an opportunity to prove God; but Abraham turned it into a temptation and went down to Egypt. God had to chasten Abraham to bring him back to the place of obedience and blessing.

While Israel was wandering in the wilderness, the nation often turned testings into temptations and tempted the Lord. No sooner had they been delivered from Egypt than their water supply vanished and they had to march for three days without water. When they did find water, it was so bitter they could not drink it. Immediately they began to murmur and blame God. They turned their testing into a temptation, and they failed.

Certainly, God does not want us to yield to temptation, yet neither can He spare us the experience of temptation. We are not God’s *sheltered* people; we are God’s *scattered* people. If we are to mature, we must face testings and temptations. There are three facts that we must consider if we are to overcome temptation.

#### Consider God’s Judgment (1:13–16)

We think of sin as a single act, but God sees it as a process. Adam committed one act of sin, and yet that one act brought sin, death, and judgment on the whole human race. James described this process of sin in four stages.

- **Desire (v. 14).**
- **Deception (v. 14).**
- **Disobedience (v. 15).**
- **Death (v. 15).**

### Consider God's Goodness (1:17)

- We need this warning today. James presented four facts about the goodness of God:
  - **God gives only good gifts.** Everything good in this world comes from God. If it did not come from God, it is not good. If it comes from God, it must be good, even if we do not see the goodness in it immediately.
  - **The way God gives is good.** We can translate the second clause "and every act of giving." It is possible for someone to give us a gift in a manner that is less than loving. The value of a gift can be diminished by the way it is given to us. But when God gives us a blessing, He does it in a loving, gracious manner. *What* He gives and *how* He gives are both good.
  - **He gives constantly.** "Cometh down" is a present participle: "it keeps on coming down." God does not give occasionally; He gives constantly. Even when we do not see His gifts, He is sending them. How do we know this? Because He tells us so and we believe His Word.
  - **God does not change.** There are no shadows with the Father of Lights. It is impossible for God to change. He cannot change for the worse because He is holy; He cannot change for the better because He is already perfect. The light of the sun varies as the earth changes, but the sun itself is still shining. If shadows come between us and the Father, He did not cause them. He is the unchanging God. This means that we should never question His love or doubt His goodness when difficulties come or temptations appear.

### Consider God's Divine Nature within (1:18)

- In the first barrier, God says, "Look ahead and beware of judgment." In the second barrier, He says, "Look around and see how good I have been to you." But with this third barrier, God says, "Look within and realize that you have been born from above and possess the divine nature."
- **It is divine.** Nicodemus thought he had to reenter his mother's womb to be born again, but he was wrong. This birth is not of the flesh: it is from above (John 3:1–7). It is the work of God. Just as we did not generate our own human birth, we cannot generate our own spiritual birth. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, it was God who performed the miracle.
- **It is gracious.** We did not earn it or deserve it; God gave us spiritual birth because of His own grace and will. "Which were born, not of blood [human descent], nor of the will of the flesh [human efforts], nor of the will of man [human assistance], but of God" (John 1:13). No one can be born again because of his relatives, his resolutions, or his religion. The new birth is the work of God.

- **It is through God's Word.** Just as human birth requires two parents, so divine birth has two parents: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. "That which is.
- **It is the finest birth possible.** We are "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures," James wrote to Jewish believers, and the word *firstfruits* would be meaningful to them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Mature Growing up in Christ*; 2nd ed. United States: David C. Cook; 2010.