

Jas06 – Temptation James 1:13-15

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message this morning, “Temptation.” James chapter 1:13-15. We’ve been talking about trials and testing for four messages. And last week we looked at a key summary verse that summarizes all that James has taught us from verse 2 through verse 12 in James chapter one, about our trials, about our testing. But we also said it was a transitional verse and that James was transitioning into something similar yet slightly different. James 1 verse 12, our transition verse, said this:

James 1:12 (ESV)

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

See these two phrases, “stood the test” and “remains steadfast under trial.” We made it clear last week that the phrase stood the test meant the test of the refiner’s fire; it’s a refining test meant to strengthen and mature our faith. And then we said that “remains steadfast under trial” refers to our perseverance to trials that come in from the outside, circumstantial trials that we all face, that Jesus promised you would face.

In verse 13 James uses similar words but with a different focus. He’s using a word that has the same root word as the trials we’ve been talking about but now all the translations start using the word temptation instead of trial. And so in verse 13 we see these slightly different words that most of the translations realize James is now talking about temptation similar to a trial. In verse 13 we go from trials that come from the outside to temptation that comes from the inside. James switches from encouragement to remain strong when you’re in trials that come from the outside to a very clear (you might say “in your face”) warning about temptations that rise up from the inside.

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, please secure your Word in our hearts. We need your Word written on our heart. We need to actually be changed by your Word. We need to receive your Word, not just hear it in our ears Lord, but receive it with intent to obey it, God. We need your Word to speak to us Lord, we’re desperate. We’re lost without you Lord. We need your Word to make a permanent, lasting imprint on our lives. We pray it would today, in Jesus’ name, amen.*

In our verses today, James is talking about all types of temptation to sin. Some scholars see these verses as temptation to sin that rises from within in response to trials from without. They say it is the temptation that rises up while you are in the pressure of outside

trials. Some scholars think that James is switching thoughts, going to a new thought, and see it more as a warning of temptation to sin that come from inside us *at any time*.

There is a danger, is there not, to us being tempted to sin because of outside trials. Something goes wrong, we get angry, and that is a sin in response to an outside trial. Someone hurts us, we get vengeful, and we have malice that rises up from within us, that is a sin in response to an outside trial. And certainly there is a danger in that.

I believe that the broader danger is any temptation that would draw us away from God and into sin that comes from within our own evil desires. The Bible says that you have evil desires in you. I believe James is switching to that. There is a greater danger of us responding to temptations that come from our own evil desires. And so in regards to our tendency to be tempted into sin because of our own sin nature, James says, the first thing he says (and he says it so well) is don't be an idiot. James says this a lot. It's a little bit in between the lines; you have to read pretty closely. But here, as we begin our text, James says (in my paraphrase) "Don't be an idiot and think that God is tempting you." Let's look at the verse. James 1:13.

James 1:13 (ESV)

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.

Doesn't it seem crazy that some people would say that God had some kind of role in their temptation to sin? We have this incredible ability to blame anything and anyone else besides us for our sin, including blaming God. Someone has said, "To err is human – to blame God is even more human."

Proverbs 19:3 states:

Proverbs 19:3 says (NLT)

3 People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord.

Our ability to blame others for our sin has been being perfected since the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:11 the Lord asked Adam, "***Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?***"

And in Genesis 3:12-13 we read:

Genesis 3:12-13 (NLT)

12 The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." (either woman's fault, or God's)

13 Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?” “The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

Since the fall of man we have been blaming someone or something other than ourselves for our sin. And so James starts this section by saying DO NOT even think about blaming God for your temptation to sin.

The language implies don’t even remotely, indirectly, in any way think God is the *source* of your temptation. And then the second half of James 1:13 says:

James 1:13 says (ESV)

13 . . . for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Most literally this sentence is: God is un-temptable. Meaning, temptation to sin and the person God can have nothing to do with each other, ever. God and sin exist in two totally separate realms that can never meet. And James wants to make sure that is clear up front, because the Holy Spirit wants to speak to us about our own sinful desires here.

And so, with that out of the way, in verse 14 James says:

James 1:14 (ESV)

14 But (instead) each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

The first thing we’ve got to come to grips with is that we are tempted to sin *by our own desire*. James makes it perfectly clear the origin (the source) of our temptation is our own sinful desire. The word used here refers to fleshly and selfish desire and it’s often used for sexual sin. But James is not referring only to sexual sin. Anger, bitterness, rage – all sins of our own desire. Desire for power, status, stuff – all sins of our own desire. The desire to get what we want and have things our way, it comes from the same sin nature as sexual sins.

The point James is making here is we must take responsibility for our own sin. Your circumstances didn’t make you do it. Your friends didn’t make you do it. The devil didn’t make you do it. You and I are tempted, lured and enticed by our own sinful desire. We have got to stop blaming God, or blaming our circumstances or blaming other people for our sin.

Who have you blamed for your sin thereby justifying your feelings or actions? Is it your parents? Your upbringing? Is it your spouse because they deserve your bitterness and anger? Is it your circumstances because they have been hard?

Guys, the source, the cause of our temptation to sin is our own evil desire, our own sin nature, *nothing else*. One of the most common deflections and justifications that prevent Christians from being transformed by God is blaming other people or things for our sin. Let's get a clue from Alcoholic Anonymous and James. The first step to your transformation is to recognize that you are a sinner, and your temptation to sin comes from your own evil desires and your own sin nature. *And that is why you need a Savior*. And notice again, James 1:14 says:

James 1:14 (ESV)

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

Lured and enticed. These words are easy to understand (for me) because these are the words of a fisherman. I love to fish, because if you're fishing with a lure the challenge is very high. You've got to study the fish. You've got to know exactly what that fish's desire is. You've got to know what will lure him out of safety. Listen carefully, because I'm talking about you and how you end up in a frying pan instead of swimming in a beautiful lake. You see, the fisherman doesn't put the desire into the fish. That desire is in the fish's nature. BUT the fisherman *does* know how to lure and entice that fish's desire to get him on the hook. The fisherman's not putting the desire into the fish. The fisherman knows how to lure and entice the fish's desire so that he can catch it, gut it and devour it.

Now the best example I have ever seen of this is an experienced fly fisherman. I don't fly fish, because it's way too much artistic talent and way too small of fish for me. But watching a good fly fisherman is an amazing thing.

He'll get right down where the fish lives. He'll get right in there and carefully study the fish's habits – study its desires. He'll very closely watch the top of the water and when a fish come up to take a fly on the surface; the fly fisherman will study the fly the fish takes, because he knows that is the fly that appeals to the fish's desire. And then he will make a counterfeit fly, one that appeals to the fish's desire and his counterfeit fly will have just one difference – it has a hook in it that's attached to the fisherman's line. Then the fisherman will watch what action of the fly attracts the fish, and he'll make his counterfeit fly act the same way. He will even try to make his counterfeit fly more desirable than a real fly. And when he's figure out the right fly and the right action and the right time, he'll "present" the fly to the fish. He will present that counterfeit fly perfectly to the fish and the fish's own desire will lure and entice it away from the safety of its home. In one gulp it will take the bait, set the hook and when reeled in will be gutted by the fisherman and devoured.

Wait a minute... am I talking about fishing? Or am I talking about how the enemy of your soul entices you into life destroying sin? Your sinful desire is already in you, the enemy just has to figure out how to lure and entice you. He has to put the right bait in front of you at the right time and present it in the right way, and BAAM, he's got you. And if you don't break free, he will land you, gut you and devour you. And if you think I am going too far in my warning, look at the next verse in James.

James 1:15 (ESV)

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

We are TEMPTED to Sin when we are Lured and Enticed by our own desire and if our desire gives birth to sin, when that sin is full grown it brings forth death.

And those of you who are playing with sin right now... you're actually convincing yourself you don't understand what God is saying here. *Hmmm, desire gives birth to sin and when sin is fully grown it gives birth to death... nah, I don't think that applies to me.* I'm *just* lookin' at porn. I'm *just* talking to a guy in a chat room who's nice to me. I'm *just* doing what my friends are doing. I'm *just* making my spouse's life miserable. **THIS warning doesn't apply to me, does it?**

Guy's, if the fish's desire "gives birth" to the fish "taking the bait" and if the hook gets set and the fish gets reeled all the way in, it is going to bring forth death for that fish. Am I talking about a fish in the water or am I talking about you playing with sin?

James switches here to the picture of child bearing because it gets across the idea that once this process starts there is a natural progression of events. The enemy of our soul dangles the bait in front of us, our sinful desire causes us to take the bait, and if the hook sets and we get reeled in we will be gutted and devoured. Romans 6:23 says the same thing.

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death . . .

And God told Adam the same thing about the forbidden fruit. In Genesis 2:17 God said:

Genesis 2:17

"If you EAT of that Fruit - You will surely DIE"

But not us, right? I know the Bible says over and over that sin brings death, but not for me, right? I can still play with sin and get away with it, right? It's not that big a deal, right?

WRONG!!!

James wants us so bad to see the danger of taking the bait. He wants us so bad to not get the hook set in our jaw and then get reeled in to be gutted and devoured.

Please do not rationalize your sin. Don't deny your sin. Stop covering and justifying your sin. Take responsibility for your sin. Confess your sin and repent of it.

1 John 1:9 (ESV)

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. So if you have been hooked – break the line – shake the hook – confess your sin – repent of it. God will forgive you and cleanse you and save you from being gutted and devoured by your sin.

Does that make some sense?

Now, HOW do you GET OUT?

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Our flesh makes us feel like there's no way out of our temptation, like we can't turn to the right or to the left. But God says there is always a way, and it is up. We can always turn "up" to God and God's faithfulness will make a way out for us. We *can* escape the temptation that's luring and enticing us. God has made a way of escape, and that way always begins with you turning from the temptation and taking that first step "up" toward God. And the first step is the hardest and the most important. It's the hardest because our flesh is so strong and must be daily crucified in Christ. The first step is the most important because the moment we obey God, God becomes our *power* to obey him. God does not overcome our temptation against our will. God *IS* our power to overcome, but he will not force that power on us. You obey God, and the instant you do, he will be your power to obey him.

We take the step of obedience in faith, and then God becomes our power to overcome the sin; our power to break the chain, to send our enemy home with *no fish dinner tonight*. We must not deny our sin. Instead we must fight it with the power of God. Don't pretend it's not there. Instead, prepare for battle. Get yourself ready to fight against it. Walk carefully in this minefield of a world, Ephesians 5 says. Put on the full armor of God, Ephesians 6 tells us. Look to Jesus; turn to him in the midst of temptation. Take the first step to turn from sin and turn to him. When you do, you will see, he has made a way out for you and he will give you the power to overcome the temptation. But we must put on the armor of God and fight the good fight.

1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

And the way he does this so often is by dangling a lure of temptation in front of your own sinful desires. Then he gets you to take the bait... and... you know the rest.

For those of you in high school, please hear me. So many of us OLD people are still dealing with the baggage we brought into our lives by the sinful choices we made in high school. Please, be very careful. Sin brings damage into your life and when sin is full grown, it brings death. Do not be easily deceived. If you "take the bait" on the sinful choices you're being tempted to make right now, it will bring damage into your life.

The good news from God is, Jesus Christ overcome the damage and death that sin brings. And he will overcome that damage in your life if you will truly turn to him today. So, if you have been lured and enticed into some damaging sin, repent, turn away fast, run to Jesus and Jesus will bring healing and peace into your life. But if that lure is dangling out there in front of you right now and you are considering "taking the bait" know right now damage and destruction is on the other end of that line. The lure of sin only looks good. But once that hook is buried in your jaw, if you don't do something fast and furious, sin will drag you away until you become a fish dinner.

Our only answer to receive salvation from sin... our only answer to receive the power to successfully fight sin, is in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12 (ESV)

12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Romans 10:13 (ESV)

13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Let's do that right now.

Let's pray. (Bow your head right now. This is a serious, serious deal. Your sin is going to bring destruction into your life. Hear it. Acknowledge it. Confess it and repent, right now. Allow that sin to come up in your mind. And tell the Lord...) *Lord Jesus, sorry. Forgive me of my sin, THAT sin, forgive me Lord. Forgive me. I repent of that sin right now. I make a commitment to turn from that sin and turn to you. And I know Lord that you're faithful, that you'll forgive me and cleanse me. Please cleanse me from my sin. Restore me to a right relationship with you, Lord. Please save me. (And if there is a sin dangling in front of you right now, make a commitment to run!) Lord I turn from that temptation and I turn to you. And I'll cling to you Jesus until the temptation is past – even if that's my whole life, I'll cling to you until it is past. You're my strength to overcome. Fill me with your Spirit to protect me from the lusts of my flesh. Make me a Spirit filled, empowered follower, in your name I pray, amen.*