

## Understanding Temptation\* – James 1:13-18

### Introduction

- MacArthur points out “one of the chief characteristics of sin is the propensity to pass the blame. What are some creative ‘excuses’ you have heard people (or yourself) give for doing something that is clearly wrong?”
- The context of our verses today, according to MacArthur centers on human nature and our tendency to deflect responsibility. “When God confronted Adam with his sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam’s reply was, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’ When the Lord asked Eve, ‘What is this you have done?’ she replied, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” (Genesis 3:12-13)
- KEY QUESTION: Is God ultimately responsible for our temptations and sin?
- ANSWER: No, and James gives us four strong proofs that God is not responsible for our temptations nor for our weakness in succumbing to sin.
- James explains:
  - The nature of evil.
  - The nature of man.
  - The nature of lust.
  - The nature of God.

### ***Resist in Deadly Temptation (1:13-18)***

- Just as a wrong reaction to testing will obstruct spiritual growth and maturity, so will a wrong response to temptation.

### Source of Temptation (1:13-14)

- (v. 13) James rebukes false teachers who were looking for an easy excuse to sin by saying – ‘I am not responsible for sinning because God is tempting me’.
- There is nothing in God which evil can make an appeal. God is literally ‘untemptable’ (see Hebrews 4:15) and never tempts anyone; but God does test us.
- QUESTION: What is the difference between temptation and testing for Christians?
- (v. 14) The source of temptation is often from within the person; it is our own evil desires, which draws us out (example in Greek: a fish drawn from a hiding place) to snare or entangle us. In this way a person both ‘builds’ and ‘baits’ his own trap (see much of Psalms on the practices of the wicked driven by lusts and evil desires).
- MacArthur adds, “The Greek word *peirasmos* (the noun form of the verb translated *tempted*) has the basic meaning of trying, testing, assaying, or proving and can have negative or positive connotations, depending on the context... [in verses 13 and 14] the idea is clearly that of temptation, of solicitation to evil. Here James deals with an entirely different concept, the difference being not in the test itself but in a person’s response to it.”

### Steps in Temptation (1:15-16)

- (v. 15) This is a vivid biological imagery to illustrate lust, sin, and death: lust and desire 'conceives' and sin is 'born' (Satan is the father of this death); the grotesque child 'sin' matures and produces its own offspring 'death'.
- (v. 16) So, don't be deceived (don't go astray or wander)!! We can all see the simple pattern in James so far: right responses to trials/tests results in spiritual growth and maturity; wrong responses to lusts/desires results in spiritual decline and ultimate death.

### Solution for Temptation (1:17-18)

- (v. 17) In contrast to the horrific cycle of sin and death is the new life that emanates from the Word of Truth! God, who created all life and the stars above, is the Father of life and salvation shares this with us who believe. Listen to the poetic Greek translation in this verse: 'every good act of giving (*dosis*) and every perfect gift (*dorema*) is from above.'
- (v. 18) The solution for temptation is to be found in a close relationship with the Father and a constant relationship with His Word. When we sin, we sin against God ultimately – so we must 'hide his Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him' – Psalms 119:11. There is no reason for us to yield to sin as chosen 'first fruits'.

### **Conclusion**

- As we close, contemplate this most important question: What have you learned about God's nature in this lesson (specifically from vv. 13, 17)?
- The solution for the constant barrage of temptation that we all experience on a daily basis is a deep and consistent relationship with God, who is changeless, loving and life giving – our response to temptation is key.