

James 1:13-18
Sermon Four – *Born from Above*
Feb 1, 2026

Vv 1-13 are the introduction to the Epistle, and they represent one thought: Trials happen, and we are to encounter them with joy, because they are the opportunity to respond with Godly wisdom, and develop the endurance that is necessary for spiritual maturity; in addition, there is promised to us the crown of life when we have passed the test. Trials turn into temptations when our own fleshly desires pull us away from responding in the will of God; sin happens when we depart from the will of God in temptation, and that sin produces death. We cannot blame God for this, because He only gives good and perfect gifts, the representative perfect gift being the rebirth from above. As regenerated creatures, we represent the redemption from the curse that is coming to all of Creation, when Jesus returns.

Trials are unavoidable (“when” **1:2**), unfortunate (“fall into” **1:2**), winnable (**1:5-8**), and temporary (“for when he has been approved” **1:12**).

V 13 Here another aspect of the word *peirasmos*, trial, is introduced; that of temptation. Temptation has an objective aspect, and a subjective aspect. It is possible to be “tempted” by something or someone else, but to not be “tempted” if the temptation is “not on your radar,” so to speak. Sin is not a possibility for God, so when Jesus was tempted by Satan, objectively, He was not tempted, subjectively (**Matthew 4:1ff**).

A trial becomes a temptation when our sinful inclination enters into the equation.

V 14 “desires” often translated “lust,” which it means in the context of sinful passion. The word does not always mean “sin” (see **Philippians 1:23**).

“each one” We all have our own temptations, and it’s important to not be too hard on a brother when he has a temptation in an area in which we do not.

“drawn away” lured out of a safe standing, with initial reluctance
“enticed” lured to a specific point

These two words, interestingly, were used in a fishing context; a fish is drawn out from his lair by the bait, then enticed to take the bait.

V 15 James uses terms of reproduction here. Conception requires a combination of desire plus action, and it “gives birth” to sin. Death becomes the grandchild of lust. Compare **Genesis 3:6**. The problem wasn’t the fruit in the tree, it was the “pair” on the ground. (J. Vernon McGee).

“sin” *hamartia* = missing the mark; a departure from divine standards; departing from the will of God.

V 16 Do not be deceived in your thinking and try to blame God for the death that happens as a result of your sin.

V 17 James does not say “God only gives good and perfect gifts,” but “every good and perfect gift is from above.” Everything good that humanity enjoys, is a gift from God.

“from above” also means “again.” See **John 3:3** Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born from above. The only cure for every problem that humanity faces is rebirth from above, one person at a time.

“variation” astrological term for change of position; “shadow of turning” shadow cast by turning; James contrasts the constant motion of the lights in Creation with the immutable stability of the Father of Lights, who exists outside of His Creation.

V 18 He “brought us forth” same Greek word as in sin “brings forth” death in verse 15. The new birth is *the* “good and perfect gift.” Sin gives birth to death by way of our lusts; God gives birth to us by way of His Word of truth! This is brought about by God’s will, not our will.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 God sends His light into the human heart that is open to receiving it. Believing in the gospel is not an act of the human will, it is being convinced of its saving truth. See **Romans 4:20-22** Abraham became “fully convinced” of the promises of God, and his faith was counted to him as righteousness. *We are saved on His promises, not our performances.*

“that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” See **Romans 8:18-21**. Born-again people are a foreshadowing of what will be happening to the entire Creation. It will be good and perfect, once again, because He only gives good and perfect things.