

James 1:12-18 “Faith and Temptations”

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Thesis: James exhorts us not to be deceived about temptation [16]. Temptation offers something it never delivers. What’s the truth about faith and temptation, and does it matter?

Knowing the truth about temptation and sin, and truth about God, can help you to make wonderful progress in your lifelong battle with temptation. This is practical sanctification that glorifies God and satisfies man! Let’s discover how together ...

Subject: Overcoming temptations

Object: Remain faithful to God when tempted

¹² Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and

every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Context: We are to remain faithful and grow through trials [1:2-11].

A. The truth about temptation and sin [13-15].

Don't blame God [13]. *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.* God's nature is entirely holy and thus He cannot tempt us to do evil or sin. Our fleshly nature, that is contrary to God, is inherited from Adam's rebellion, and is not God's original design. Therefore, in considering the nature vs. nurture paradox, we don't want to conclude, "God made me this way" or "God just wants me to be happy."

Do take responsibility [14]. *each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.* Satan is the tempter, but you are responsible for your response [Matt. 4:3]. We have a tendency to shift blame to others. For example, when God confronts Adam about his sin Adam blames Eve and blames God for giving her to him [Gen. 3:12]. Unfortunately, humanity tends to follow Adam's example rather than taking responsibility. *Enticed* in the Greek is a fishing term used in reference to a fish seeing the bait, being tempted, and getting hooked.

Desires can be destructive [15]. *When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.* Temptation begins with the senses of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. Then a thought begins and the mind plans action. The thought is either submitted to God's authority, lingers, or is acted upon resulting in rebellion and separation from God [Gen.2:17]. Desire refers to temptation, or a yearning to satisfy a natural impulse in a way that God forbids, and that God can better satisfy (e.g. love, affirmation, peace, contentment).

Eve saw the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she desired and she took and ate the fruit. Satan had tempted Eve with pleasure and prominence but her rebellion produced immeasurable pain [Gen. 3:6]. Similarly, King David lusted for Bathsheba, seeking pleasure in a way that God forbids, and the result was an indescribable wake of damage for David, his household, and the kingdom [2Sam. 11].

B. The truth about God [12, 16-18]

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him [12].

Happy or blessed is the person who despite temptation finds contentment in God. The Greek *peirasmos* is translated as either tempt or trial depending on context. Satan tempts to draw us away

from God, and God allows trials to grow us in our faith. Resisting temptation is evidence of your love for God. God rewards *those who love Him with the crown of life* [12].

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren [16]. Satan seeks to deceive you about temptation, sin and God's nature [Gen. 3]. Satan only comes to steal, kill, and destroy [Jn. 10:10].

Here are four truths about God:

God loves you [16] You are *beloved brethren*. They were loved by James, but more importantly loved by God. The perfect love that we yearn for is available only through God.

God is good [17] *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from the Father.* God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. In the Garden of Eden, Satan suggested that God was withholding something good from Adam and Eve by prohibiting them from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In reality, God's boundaries are always intended for our good.

God doesn't change [17] *Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* God is the Father of lights referring to moral truth. Since God's nature doesn't change, you can be confident of His love and goodness.

God gives life [18,12] *Of His own will He brought us forth [18]* refers to spiritual life available through committing to Christ. God is the giver of physical life, a good gift, and spiritual life a perfect gift. The price for sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life [Rom. 6:23]. You can *receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him [12]*. Here the Greek word translated “crown” is *stefanos* referring to a victor’s crown rather than *diadem* a royal crown, which seems appropriate for as long as we live on this earth we will battle with temptation.

C. The truth about overcoming temptation [18]

He brought us forth by the word of truth... God has given you a spiritual birth through Christ.

Your spiritual birth results in the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, and His power to overcome temptation. And the word of truth, or Bible, is crucial to the process of experiencing spiritual life. The Bible reveals God, His holiness, the consequences of sin, our need for a Savior, Christ’s redemption, restoration, and relationship. The Bible also reveals the spiritual battle that exists, and Satan’s desire to keep us from coming to Christ, or growing in Christ; and the place of temptation in that struggle.

Knowing the Bible helps. When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden, he challenged the truth of what God declared, “Has God indeed said ...” [Gen. 3:1]. Conversely, when Jesus was tempted three times by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus responded with Scripture on each occasion [Matt. 4:1-11].

Presumably, Jesus was giving us an example regarding the word of God and overcoming temptation.

Devoting yourself to God helps. We are to *be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*. Firstfruits are an offering of dedication and devotion to God. The worshiper acknowledges their dependence upon God. Later in this letter, James will urge us, “Humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” [Ja. 4:7]. Before we can resist, we need to humble ourselves before God or submit to Him.

The battlefield of temptation is in one sense the mind. Thus, we are told, “Bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” [2Cor. 10:5]. Nevertheless, the primary battle is our hearts. Our devotion to God is the greatest factor in our response to temptation.

The reality is that none of us will win every battle with temptation. Holding up the ideal of moral perfection from imperfect people can produce two unintended consequences. First, shame, guilt, discouragement, and defeat that causes us to give up the battle. Second, hypocrisy, pride, and false-piety that are also destructive to self and others. The truth is: knowing the truth about temptation and sin, and truth about God, can help you to make wonderful progress in your lifelong battle with temptation. This is practical sanctification that glorifies God and satisfies man...

Study Guide Qs

Q1. If you could go back in time, what would you tell your younger self about temptation and sin?

Q2. If you could go back in time, what would you tell your younger self about God?

Q3. How has knowing the Bible and devoting yourself to God helped you to overcome temptation?

Q4. What advice would you give to someone struggling with temptation?

Digging Deeper

1. Here is an interesting article regarding firstfruits, <https://www.gotquestions.org/firstfruits-offering.html>.

2. Here is an excellent article about overcoming temptation, <https://www.gotquestions.org/overcome-temptation.html>