

# James the Just: Temptation

The last couple of weeks we have looked at James' wisdom for responding to trials. James reminds us that we will ALL face trials, no one is exempt from that. What is important is our response because a trial is a test that proves our faith. We as believers should take advantage of trials and profit from them. Take what satan intends for bad and use that good that God makes out of them.

Another thing we all face is temptation. Temptation is enticing, which means that it's something that leads you one by exciting hope or desire.

Temptation is something that attracts you or lures you, often by offering you something that is supposedly good.

We are constantly offered a choice between the world and the Kingdom. And even though we KNOW which one we SHOULD choose, we often choose the other.

It's like comparing water and Coke.

Water is like the Kingdom of God. Pure, clean water is good for you. Not only is it good for you, it is BEST for you. There is nothing that you can drink that is better for you. It's what you need to drink to survive. Water is calorie free, sugar free, hydrating, and benefits your health in several ways.

Water looks boring, and even though you know it's what you need, you often will choose anything else.

Water is not always appealing, sometimes you just drink water because everyone else is doing it and you don't want to be the only one "not being good" and choosing a Coke

Coke on the other hand, is like the world. Coke lures you in with their fancy advertising. Coke has one of the most recognizable logos in history. They have commercials that appeal to your desires. They make Coke appear to be so refreshing.

You know it's not good for you, but you just want it anyway! Some of you may be able to resist it and only give in on occasion, others are hooked and can't go a couple hours without it.

Once you have tasted an ice cold Coke, you realize that temporary satisfaction and how good it seems, you don't even care about the long term effects "it's just one". Only you forgot about the caffeine that fuels the craving for MORE!

And Coke full of temptation, comes in many different flavors, cherry, vanilla, with lime, diet, whatever you desire!

Coke is attractive....and man does it taste good! But it corrodes your teeth, it dehydrates your body, it gives you gas, makes you feel bloated and has NO actual benefits.

Water may not look as flashy or be as popular. Water is always around and is taken for granted even though it sustains life and is full of benefits. It's the best thing for you.

How often do you chose Coke anyway? Can you resist the temptation?

Temptation can be difficult to fight off....I want a Coke right now, even knowing the negative effects it has on my body!

Temptation is a constant struggle! Someone right now is thinking "It's not a struggle for me, I just give in to it!" Well let's see today what we SHOULD do with temptation.

PRAY

### **James 1:12**

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.

First, who wants to be blessed? The word blessed means happy, fortunate, blissful. Not just an emotion, but a God given well-being, a state of BEING blessed not just FEELING blessed.

Who gets this? The man who suffers? The man who is miserable? NO! The man who ENDURES temptation. The man who proves faithful to Jesus....that is who is blessed, that is who can enter into this state of being blessed and happy.

For those of you who have overcome great obstacles in this life. When you are victorious through Christ, how great does that feel??? It's indescribable!

The man who holds fast to his faith during a time of temptation, that man is blessed but is also approved and will receive the crown of life! A reward! Because you WIN!

So how do we win, how do we endure temptation?

### **James 1:14**

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.

First we need a proper perspective on temptation. God allows us to go through trials, because again trials prove something, trials show US our faith. Trials grow us. While they are not fun to endure, they produce good fruit.

What God doesn't do is tempt us to do evil. God does allow us to endure trials to prove our faith to us but He doesn't entice us to sin. God is good.....all of the time.

### **1 John 1:5**

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

Because God is good, He can't be tempted by evil and He doesn't tempt anyone. People like to blame God as though He would tempt us but it just doesn't make sense if He is good...and He is!

Just because God is all powerful and all knowing, it does not mean that everything is God's fault or that He did it or caused it

I as a pastor would not tempt you with sin. If you are an alcoholic I'm not going to take you to a bar and set free shots in front of you just to see what you would choose. That would not make me a very good pastor.

When Jesus was tempted, the Holy Spirit led Him to the wilderness, this was the trial, God allows and may even lead us to a trial. But who did the tempting? Satan! Not God. And Satan appealed to the flesh!

We all face temptations. And temptations are personal because we are all vulnerable in different ways. There are things that tempt me that would not tempt you. There are things that tempt you that would not tempt me.

Satan has tailor made temptations for you to fit your weaknesses.

Don't blame God. They are your weaknesses! The blame game started back in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit.

### **Genesis 3:12**

12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

Who does Adam blame for his weakness? GOD! "The woman whom YOU gave me!" It's really not even Eve's fault right? God gave her to Adam, if God hadn't done that, Adam surely would have never eaten the fruit....yeah right.....good one Adam!

So God turns to Eve....

**Genesis 3:13**

13 And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"  
The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Oh brother.....if we don't blame God, surely it is the devils fault! Does this sound like you?

People say:

"God tempted me!" - The truth is God doesn't tempt

"Oh, then satan made me do it" - The truth is all he did was appeal to your weakness, don't give the devil so much credit....

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 we must be aware of satan's schemes so he doesn't outsmart us or take advantage of us.

Here is the secret...Temptation is not an event but a process.....and the process starts with your OWN DESIRES!

Evil and temptation are in our own hearts....

**Matthew 15:18-20**

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

**James 1:14-15**

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.

People are drawn away by their own desires. The Greek word for drawn away is *exelkō*, it's actually a hunting and fishing term meaning to lure out from it's hiding place.

Our desires are lured out just like baiting a bear by putting some kind of meat in a trap. The bear desires the meat and that desire lures the bear out from it's hiding place. While not knowing the meat is in a trap, the bear goes for it and there you are waiting to shoot it. Do you think the bear would eat the meat knowing it would cost it's life?

Or like fishing where we put a worm on a hook. All the fish sees is a fat juicy worm wiggling around, it desires the worm and that desire lures the fish out from it's hiding place. While not knowing that there is a hook, the fish bites down, you set the hook, before the fish knows it...it's being fried! Would the fish have gone for the worm knowing it would cost it's life?

Inner desires respond to outward enticement and that is where sin is birthed.

Man has this strong desire to enjoy or acquire things to fulfill the flesh. Because of the fallen nature of man we have a strong desire for sin that will satisfy the flesh.

We are partially enticed by sin because we do not see the consequences. Satan shows you the bait but not the hook. But the hook is there even when you are deceived into believing that it's not!

The consequences of sin are very real, but you can be blinded by the strength of your desire!

James compares temptation to pregnancy. When a woman is pregnant, she thinks about the baby a lot. As the baby grows, the woman begins to make changes in her life to accommodate the baby. She will read material on pregnancy and find a desire to bond with other pregnant women.

Sin works the same way. This desire is in you and as you give into temptation, it begins to grow. You begin to think about the sin a lot. You make changes in your life to accommodate the growing desire to sin. You find that you are drawn to sinful material and have an attraction to others with the same sin.

Only unlike the birth of a child that brings life, the birth of sin brings death.

Temptation never reveals it's ultimate goal, but God reveals the goal of temptation - death

**James 1:16-18**

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.

James says don't be deceived. Don't be manipulated or believe the lie that God tempts us or that temptation or sin is God's fault or doing. That is a lie straight from the devil!

God never gives us evil temptations but what He gives is every good gift and every perfect gift!

**Matthew 7:11**

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Difficulties in life are intended to strengthen and perfect God's people making them more like Jesus!

**Romans 8:28**

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

So not only does God not tempt us to sin but He also knows your limits. Sin is your own doing because you get lured away by your desires, and even still God's hand protects you....

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God knows your limits and provides a way of escape so that you can bear it. This means if you are currently overtaken by the world in some area of your life, Jesus provides a way out. It doesn't matter what temptation pulls the strings of your heart's desires.

Look at Jesus being tempted.

**Luke 4:1-2**

1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil.

When Jesus was led into the wilderness He was led by the Holy Spirit. But first He was FILLED with the Holy Spirit. That's how you bear the temptation.....the power of the Holy Spirit in your life!

Are you submitted to the Spirit of God or desire of the flesh? Each and every day you must make that choice. In the face of each and every temptation you must make that choice because you WILL be faced with it again and again.

**Matthew 26:41**

41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Jesus tells the apostles to watch and pray so they don't fall into temptation ....you think maybe that is the key? The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak and wants to give into temptation. Because temptation doesn't give up, temptation is relentless.

**Luke 4:13**

13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Temptation returns, if it returned to Jesus don't you think it will return to YOU?

No matter what lures your sin out of hiding, Jesus provides a way out....so that you may be able to bear it! Notice that??? Back in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul didn't say that Jesus removes temptation from your life. He provides a way of escape so you can bear it.

There is no mention of the temptation slowing or never returning or being entirely defeated, but He has made a way for you to overcome temptation every single time it rears it's ugly head!

C.S. Lewis: "No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because he was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows *to the full* what temptation means--the only complete realist."

#### WORSHIP TEAM

Remember the presence of temptation is not a sin, in fact the struggle itself is proof that God is very close to us. Our sensitivity to sin is a gift of God's Holy Spirit. It is a sign of our salvation. There would be no inner battle if we were lost. It is when we can sin without remorse, with no experience of inner tension, only when sin has become easy, that we should be alarmed.

Turn to Jesus!

#### **Hebrews 2:18**

18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

If you have struggles you are dealing with, it's time to ask yourself this question - Am I going to try to fix my life or am I going to give my life to Jesus

We may have a sinful nature and natural sinful desires but when you give your life to Christ and become indwelt by His Spirit, you have the key for victory.