

Why do we sin!? Why do you and I fail to obey God’s clear commands? A childhood friend usually followed an unkind act or word with “*The devil made me do it*”. Is that how you feel about the evil you do (or the good you don’t do)? Is Satan pulling the puppet strings of your life? Or is God toying with you!?

James helps us with this dilemma by offering a “faith positioning system”! Faith in God leads us; not doubt: “*the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*” (James 1:6)

### Proposition

A few weeks ago, we started to consider a new series of sermons from the letter of James. Our title is, “**Navigating Faith: A journey through the book of James**”. Following Jesus requires the **guidance** of God’s Word and **power** of the Holy Spirit. Followers of Jesus engage with Scripture and Spirit by **faith**.

Last Sunday we were reminded that there is purpose and resources when we face trials. Today our sermon is “**The Source of Temptations**”. In our text we see a most challenging context of trials is the temptation to disobey God. No believer is immune to temptation. “*We all stumble in many ways.*” (3:2)

This is where we need to reaffirm the value of James’ letter. Sir Francis Bacon, the English philosopher and statesman wrote in 1597, “*reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man*”. James has a passionate, pastoral purpose. He longs for the **completeness** we have in Christ (Colossians 2:10) be lived out in **maturity** of action or “works” (James 1:4).

Let us read our text, **James 1:12-18**. You will note that this text overlaps with last week’s section. Please join me in examining three important considerations concerning the source and impact of temptation.

### [1] The reality of temptation – v. 12

First, we need to affirm that temptation is a reality faced by one and all. Last week, regarding trials, we were challenged not to be a **sour orange**. Rather, we can mature in Christ through trials! As the Christian perseveres through opposition, one discovers the purpose God has for maturity and growth. Such trials are “**evil from without**” as the original term (πειρασμοισ) referred to an outward difficulty. And it is in “persevering” (υπομενει) that we will one day receive a “crown of life” (στεφανον της ζωης).

In the following verses, we see the “**evil from within**” or temptation. Some English translations use “temptation” for both *outer* trials and *inner* temptations – it is the same term in the original but contains both meanings. Serious followers of Jesus are equally prepared for temptations as trials. Both demonstrate the spiritual allegiance of the believer (I Timothy 1:12). Do we face the reality of temptation yet consider ourselves blessed!? This is what Jesus proclaimed in the beatitudes: “*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:10)

### [2] The responsibility for temptation – vv. 13-15

Our second consideration is to identify who is responsible for the tempting. Is it God? Our understanding of Him should shout “no”! Verse 17 will prove a powerful contrast, in the style of wisdom literature. The term for temptation (πειραξομαι – *pres pass part*) can mean an enticement to sin, in addition to referring to a trial. The term is found five times in verses 13-14. Temptations are those ways in which Satan lures us to disobey God’s righteous standards and goals. But does Satan make the choice to sin for us? No. That is our personal responsibility and a result of our sinful nature – this dilemma is a “law” or principle which Paul discusses at length in Romans 7.

Unfortunately, those receiving James' letter entertained the erroneous idea that God somehow was the author of temptation. That is why James wrote, "let no one say" (v.13). We must realize that God is unaffected by sin's temptation and completely separate from tempting us. We must see our personal responsibility before Him! Notice three steps of temptation to sin as James explained it in verses 14-15.

- **Lust** – we should expect desire-enticement ("carried away"); as hunters or fisherman use lures
- **Linger** – if we do not resist by God's grace, our desire "conceives"; the enticement is "fertilized"
- **Legacy** – if we consent to sin, then a death is the result of our lust moving from notion to action

Remember our theme? Scripture and Spirit **navigation** is what we need in the time of temptation. We must not only see the reality of the temptation, but the danger it poses to our spiritual lives. We can become an unfruitful branch (see [John 15:5-11](#)). This is a helpful understanding. Followers of Jesus must not fall into just avoiding **failure** syndrome but seek to be **fruitful** as we "abide and obey".

The quality of life to which we have been appointed is one of **fruitfulness**, by means of loving obedience and submission to our Heavenly Gardener! Our focus should be on the life of the Vine, which is Jesus, producing righteous fruit in our lives. This is antithetical to sinful desires.

### [3] The recognition about temptation – vv. 16-18

Our final consideration involves an important recognition. As we just noted, the mature follower of Christ is not fixated on not failing. James wrote with a discipleship mindset – to help believers be "complete" (1:4) in Christ. Such maturity involves the renewing of our minds which is a shift from fearing God as "tempting tyrant" to relating to Him as benevolent Heavenly Father! If we are seeing God as the former, this is deception or (lit.) "error" (v.16). A true recognition of temptation includes God goodness, which is...

- Great in scope – "every good and perfect" ("complete" as in 1:4) *gift*" (v.17 – contrast with v.13)
- Reflects His perfection – "Father of lights...no variation or shifting shadow" (v.17b)
- Transformative in power – "birth" ("begat", KJV) *through the word of truth*"(v.18a – see [Eph 1:13](#))
- Exciting in anticipation – "first fruits among His creatures" (v.18b – see [Eph 1:13](#))

From Alistair Begg (see [Truth For Life](#)), I heard: "*The imperatives flow from the infinitives.*" There are 54 **imperatives** in James (eg. "do...don't do"). To fulfill these works, we must know who we are. That is why Christian **infinitives** (eg. "to be" or "you are") are vital! Consider just six in [Colossians 2:10-13](#).

- In Christ you have been brought to **fullness**.
- In Him you were also **circumcised** with a circumcision not performed by human hands.
- You have been buried with him in **baptism**.
- You were also **raised** with Him through your faith in the working of God.
- God made you **alive** with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

### Conclusion – Digging Deeper

In 1939, the Quaker mystic Thomas R. Kelly wrote, "*Out in front of us is the drama of men and of nations, seething, struggling, laboring, dying...but within the silences of the souls of men an eternal drama is ever being enacted....On the outcome of this inner drama rests, ultimately, the outer pageant of history.*"

What is the **inner drama** of your heart today? Are you confused? Let God produce His good gifts in you.