

James 1:13-18 – The Test of Faith in the Test of Temptation

There was a young man in his dorm room playing a video game. Each accomplishment of levels of the game led to the desire to reach the next level, and the next level. Before long, he found that he had lost track of time and missed the most important day of his college life. He missed the class where he was to take a final exam. There was no make-up. His desire to succeed in the game was another step that caused him to forfeit his college career. How foolish, we say. Yet, there are other desires that lure us to fail in other areas of our lives, including our spiritual life.

Today, we celebrate the accomplishment of a goal. For some, this goal is a step to a greater goal. The greater goal comes in the form of a degree or another degree. The greater goal may be that of a long, enjoyable career in that to which God calls you. I hope all of this co-exists with your desire to grow more as a follower of Christ.

God wants you to grow in both. He has for you that which He has created you to become. He has for you also the desire to become more and more like Christ. He wants you to know Him more and be more conformed to His image.

Know, however, that with the successes and with the pursuit of your goals, career-wise and spiritual, you will face temptations that if not resisted will destroy ambitions, goals, and even lives. I want you to be aware of this. I want to use the book of James to show you what you need to know to resist when those temptations do come.

James 1

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted [a]by God"; for God cannot be tempted [b]by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin [c]is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be [d]deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or [e]shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be [f]a kind of first fruits [g]among His creatures.

Four Things You Should Know that will Help you through Temptation

Know Your God

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God." God is unable to tempt anyone to sin. Why? For, God cannot be tempted by evil, and He does not tempt anyone. It is complete opposite of His nature. This is talking of someone trying to rationalize evil and sin. James says God is not directly nor indirectly responsible for evil. Such rationalization is not godly.

He cannot and will not allow anything evil to be in His presence. It cannot happen for God is holy and pure.

The flip side to that coin is verse 17. What does come from God is not sin. God has complete responsibility for every good thing, and every perfect gift. That will never change. I'm sure you have noticed how shadows change according to the season of the year. The earth revolving around the sun, rotated on its axis, causes the shadows to shift. Even though the shadow shifts, there is no shifting of God. He is constant. God's character of holiness, His power and wisdom, and His love

have no variation. It is constant, forever. The Lord declares in Malachi 3:6, "I, the Lord, do not change. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all."

What He has promised in scripture that is good and right will bring fullness to our lives. Find what He gives through scripture. Stay in fellowship with Him. Know Him more and more, and you will find yourself able to recognize God and what is not of God.

John Piper writes, "Sin is trusting more in the empty promises of Satan instead of trusting in the full promises of God."

Know the Power of Your Human Nature

Verse 14 tells us of the power of our human nature in relation to temptation. Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Lust is understood as our own strong, human desires. We have certain drives and certain desires that are a part of our nature. Drives and desires we have that are part of our nature are pretty much neutral. It's what we do with the desires that make it right or wrong. Do we tame those desires so they fall under the authority of God's Word? If so, we channel the desires in ways that are according to God's will. However, if we do not take those desires, but instead allow them to be fulfilled outside of God's will as found in scripture, then that is where we sin.

The desire to acquire is part of nature.

The desire for sex is part of our nature.

The desire to eat is part of our nature.

The desire for power is part of our nature.

When these desires are in the context of God's Word, they are useful to God's Kingdom.

One factor that determines whether the desires are channeled in God's way or not is how much selfishness gets in the way. That which drives self is our sin nature.

Author Rosaria Butterfield says that being born with a sin nature is a little bit like inheriting a garden. In a radio interview Butterfield put it this way:

Let's say that you inherited an enchanting garden. And for 10 years, you just let it thrive. You let it do anything it wanted. You never pruned back the weeds. You never got rid of the pests. You never worked with the roses. You just let it quote-unquote "thrive."

And after 10 years, what is it? It's a disaster. It might even be way past the point of no return. And you go to a master gardener and you say, "Hey, this is not fair. I want my money back. I just did everything I could to let this garden thrive. I let it do exactly what it wanted." You know, the master gardener's going to laugh at you and say, "Buddy, gardens come with weeds! It's part of its nature and by failing to deal with that, *you* destroyed it."

What happens is that our desires are distracted and enticed. We start seeing something that arouses our desires that may go pass the line of obedience.

Mr. Largemouth Bass is suspended in the water next to a weed happy as he can be. Suddenly, a light or a movement distracts his attention. Humm. Looks like a juicy worm. It is much bigger than worms we have here. Mr. Bass watches the worm wiggle and jiggle. Soon Mr. Bass can't help it. "I wants it, my precious." Mr. Bass bites to find that the promise of the worm is a fake, but it is too late. He is hooked. That's how we are tempted. That which distracts and entices looks so full, but once bitten into, we find that the promises are empty. That is sin.

Know the Cycle of Sin

The cycle of sin is illustrated with the cycle of life. When lust or desire is conceived into lust, it gives birth to sin. Our desire is deceived by the fluff of that which tempts us. We start rationalizing away the wrong of that which tempts us. After we convince ourselves that only one time won't hurt, disobedience happens and sin is born.

Like anything that is new, sin may be appealing and fun. However, as the verses says, "When sin is accomplished, mature, has run its full course, it brings death."

Sin destroys. Sin kills. Sin will kill your relationships. Sin will kill your career. Sin will kill your testimony. Sin will kill your zeal for the Lord. Sin will kill your college career. Sin will kill your professional career. Sin will kill the striving towards goals. Sin has a destructive force that is too often and becoming more often ignored.

The Bible tells us that not only will sin kill. It also has the power to enslave. Jesus tells us in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."

Know Who you are with Christ in your life

Verse 18: "In the exercise of His will, He brought us forth... This is referring to the new birth. It is your life when you committed your life to Him as Lord and Savior. Do you know who you are with Christ in your life? You are adopted as a son of God. That means you are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and it means that no one and nothing can take away your status as a son of God.

The Bible also uses a term that says we are a child of God. The word means a child in the sense that we take on character traits of God like a natural born child take on character traits of his or her parents.

1 John 3:9 says, "9 No one who is [a]born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is [e]born of God.

Because you are God's child, you have everything you need to resist temptation because you have God.

You have God the Father who has given His character trait to resist temptation. You have God the Son, Jesus Christ, who is a high priest who understands your temptation, and intercedes for you during the temptation. You have God the Spirit, the Holy Spirit who empowers you to resist the temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 is a fabulous verse regarding temptation. It is one that is worth your memorizing.

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

The escapes are given to us in scripture. Let me share one with you. It won't take but a few seconds.

2 Timothy 2:22 Now flee from **youthful lusts** and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

There may be a temptation you are facing right now. Something is distracting you away from following Christ. It is luring you away like the juicy fake worm was luring Mr. Largemouth Bass.

Pursue righteousness right living for God. Pursue faith in God's real and full promises. Pursue love that seeks the best for others and not for self. Pursue peace that the Holy Spirit gives to you when you do resist, and the peace that says, "Way to go, follower!"