

## Understanding Temptation for Our Sanctification

James 1:13-15

July 9, 2023

If you would turn in your Bible to James, the book of James, we will be continuing on in our study of the book of James. We're still in chapter 1. Today we're gonna look at verses 13 through 15. Verses 13 through 15 of James chapter 1. And as we do that, we do need to once again remind ourselves about the context in which James is a delivering this letter.

James is speaking to a group of Jewish Christians. As we mentioned last week, they're most likely a community of Jewish Christians that have been displaced refugees from Jerusalem a who, who most likely fled during the persecution of the early believers that we read about in Acts 8 and Acts 11. They were being persecuted by religious Jewish authorities and governmental gentile authority authorities alike, and they were facing many severe tests of poverty that would natural, naturally coincide with a persecuted displaced people who embraced a hated and despised religion.

And in addition to that, they are facing all of the regular trials of physical and relational issues that everyone experiences to one degree or another. So they had all those going on also. We've talked about how one of the main themes in the book of James is the theme of trials and how believers in these situations and in trying situations ought to think and respond in the midst of them. And this is the theme that we once again return to today. This is the underlying context of the entirety of the book, and you can only really rightly understand every passage within this context it, with this background. And this is especially true of the entire introduction of the book, which runs through verse 18 of chapter 1 and, and really through the entirety of chapter 1.

James has trials really in mind there. There is definitely a sense in which you could preach a really, really long multipoint sermon on chapter 1. And like a really, I know you already think you already preach a really long sermon on three verses of but, but I really like hours all day, that type of thing. And, and, and you could really feel that the, the cohesiveness of the entire chapter.

So there is a, there is definitely that sense. So, so let's go ahead and read chapter 1. We'll read verses 1 through 18 a, just so we again have the entirety of the context of the passage we're gonna be looking at today in our minds.

James chapter 1, 1 through 18 says this, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways.

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"Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

So with, with that in mind and now with a few sermons from chapter 1 under our belts. With this understanding of trials as the context, we are hopefully seeing now the logical progression that James is making throughout this chapter, the way he weaves and addresses certain imperatives and ways of Christian thinking, specifically around trials through this whole section.

This whole section. So verses 2 through 4, again, it's the opening command to count trials as joy. And the rest of the section really is helping us understand what that looks like. Positive things we should be doing to make this a reality, to ensure that our trials accomplish God's purposes for us. And also commands and instructions that tell us what not to do, how to avoid sin in our trials.

So in that first section of verses, we see the overall reason for joy in our trials. And that is because it is precisely through trials that God intends to work in our lives to do for us that which every Christian longs for the most, to grow in Christ like maturity. To become more and more like Jesus. The word for trial that has been used is the Greek word

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*peirasmos*. It is one that more directly, probably more directly means testing. Or as we're going to discuss today, it can also mean temptation. But it is this understanding of testing that he has had in mind throughout these first 12 verses.

And it, it, it really is helpful to think of trials and testing the same way because the word testing reminds us that there is a purpose behind the difficulty, just like a test in school, you know, there's a purpose for that test. It's not just random. So we read and study the word of God and we and we and we understand better the character of God. And we see from his word how we are to live and think what we are to, and what we are to desire. But it is in the testing of our lives that we discover if we really do in fact believe those things, if we really have taken those things to heart, if they really are true to us.

So God has a good purpose for us in our trials, but his kindness abounds even more as we see in verses 5 through 8, because knowing our weakness that we still struggle, we are told that we can go to him in faith and ask for wisdom in the time of

our testing and he will give it to us. He then in verses 9 through 11 touches on how wisdom and a godly mindset rightly thinks about and understands the difficulties and trials that arise in the area of money, arguing against the wrong worldly ways, we can be tempted to think when it comes to riches and poverty.

So that section is about a specific trial. And then verse 12 that we looked at last week is then this kind of wonderful summation statement that James uses to describe the blessed state of every believer as they live and respond to trials in a sanctifying way. What it means about who they are now in this life and the wonderful future that also awaits them.

So it is important to have all of this in mind where we have come from to get to this point today, but especially that last verse in mind as we, as we head into this section today. James's intention is that the joy of the truths of that last verse, of verse 12, would serve as the underlying motivation for fleeing from the type of wrong response to trials that we're going to be talking about this morning. After spending some time

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helping us think about God's purposes in our trials and being motivated and, and encouraged by God's kindness in giving us trials, James now moves on to address the wrong way that we often end up responding to trials. And he does this by teaching us about the reality and the character of temptation.

And that brings us to our outline for today. Three points for your notes today. Number one the context of temptation. Number two the origin of temptation. Number three the progression of temptation. So we see right there, right away in verse 13, our first point, the context for temptation that James is talking about. James says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."

So, the context for temptation in James's teaching here is, is supposed to be seen as during a time of trial. And that's not to say the temptation to sin doesn't come around in other areas of life. You're going to be going about any area of of life and suddenly a temptation towards sin just jumps in into your life,



into your normal daily walk. And much of actually what we talked about today is applicable to temptation whenever it comes. But the reason that James needs to address it here in this section is because anytime we are going through a time of testing, going through a trial, temptation to sin is present.

In fact, if you listen to the testimonies of many people who are in jail or people who have ruined their lives through a pattern of sin that they became slaves to, whether it's gambling or drunkenness or drug abuse or gluttony or theft or adultery or pornography or bitterness, anger, all of those sins. Many times you'll find out that it was during a difficult trial where they first followed the temptation that led to a lifelong pattern of slavery to a particular sinful practice.

Temptation is generally defined by secular sources as the desire to engage in some form of activity that would give you a temporary enjoyment at the cost of long term goals. And that's a secular definition, and there's some truth to that. But when we talk about it from a biblical standpoint, we generally mean to be incited toward some form of sin which will then lead you to a

form of temporary enjoyment at the cost of a long term good. And that definition of temptation is actually quite different from the understanding of what a trial or a test is, what a trial or a test of our faith might be.

Yet the difficult thing that many struggle with here in this section is the same word in Greek means trial and temptation. *Peirasmos*. It can mean trial and it can mean temptation. Depends on the context. As I as I was looking through commentaries this week, I discovered that there are actually quite a few languages that, because of the close connection between the concepts of trials and temptation, they use the same or similar sounding word for both testing and temptation.

And in those languages like Greek, it is the context that indicates how to interpret each word and each situation. And it was actually helpful to read one commentator, a who, who is familiar with many of these languages and the Bible translations in those languages. And he said that native speakers of these languages actually have a much easier time distinguishing the

difference when they study New Testament Koine Greek than native English speakers do because they're used to that. Used to using context to make that decision.

So while this might be a slight difficulty for us, we need to know, we need to be reassured that it was not for the original audience. Pretty much all commentators, even the more liberal ones, agree that James definitely expects his readers to realize that he is shifting from the meaning of testing to temptation. Here in these verses. The only real disagreement is where exactly is that taking place?

So in verse 12 we have a form of that word *peirasmos*, and it clearly should be defined as trial or testing and not temptation because like we talked about last week, that word, the word *dokimos*, the Greek word *dokimos* is right there. The word that's translated as stood the test and it literally has the mean of being approved after a test. So it makes sense that *peirasmos* used before it is definitely referring to testing.

Actually as I was looking at my notes from last week, it looked like, and I don't know if I did this but I might have said something like *dokimos* is another word for testing. A but, but it is, actually refers to the result of testing. Being approved at the end of the time of testing. So, so sorry if I wasn't clear on that, but, but, but that understanding really helps us to nail down that at least in verse 12, *peirasmos* is still meaning trials. That's James intention there.

So therefore, the place that James is shifting the meaning must be here in verse 13. And indeed it, it seems as though James, as he has done throughout the book, is connecting thoughts from previous verses with linking words. So we've looked at that already in some of the other sermons from James, one how he connects thought to thought with linking words from one verse to another.

So the real question then is, is in verse 13, where do we make the, the change with *peirasmos*? So you can see that the translators of the ESV. So if you're looking in your ESV, they made the decision to translate it as tempted in both uses. So he

says, let no one say when he is tempted. I am being tempted by God and, and this is certainly a faithful and a possible translation, and many other translations follow that same line of thinking. But I think there is a different translation that fits better with James's style and what he has been doing throughout the book. In particular the way he likes to link verses, like we said, and shift themes and thoughts with nuanced variations of the same word.

So the CSB translates this phrase at the beginning of a verse 13 like this. No one undergoing a trial should say I am being tempted by God. So you see the difference there. But whichever way you translate it, the overall principle that James is teaching is going to be the same. But I do just think that this is, that this better renders what James is probably trying to do here to connect this teaching on temptation to the broader teaching on trials, rather than to break it off into a separate teaching on temptation all of a sudden.

We also need to understand that the word translated as, by, in this passage, "let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being

tempted by God". It doesn't necessarily mean directly by but, but it can have the sense of, of an even broadly by. In fact, there is a different word that James could have used if he meant to refer only to a specific accusation that God is directly tempting him toward sin.

So, so with those kind of two thoughts in mind and with that grammar in mind, then we can kind of come to the conclusion that, that one situation that James seems to be addressing here, one situation that he's concerned about, would be to go after those people who might be saying during a particular difficult trial, something along the lines of, well, of course I'm acting like this, of course I'm angry, of course I'm bitter. How could I not lose my temper? How could I not start drinking? How could I not give in to lust? Just look at the circumstances around me. Look at the situation surrounding me. Of course I'm going to sin. Anyone's gonna sin in a, in a situation like this.

So this person may or may not be taking, or making an accusation that God is the direct cause of their temptation, but they do in some way or another accuse him of tempting them, and

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therefore he shares blame for their fall into sin. So while, while you all, as you know, the theologically astute church that you are, would never say something as brash as I am being tempted by God. I know you wouldn't. But you may still make essentially the same type of accusation just by having a dismissive attitude toward your sin because you were in such an extreme and difficult trial that of course, of course you're gonna sin. That was always the likely outcome.

So, for example, maybe you're already struggling with sinful anger, and then you find yourself with a splitting headache coming off a night of very little sleep at a middle school band concert right in front of the sixth grader who's just been playing trumpet for seven weeks now. Of course I'm going to fall into sin in at least my attitude. And you know what? I should actually get a high marks for only sinning in my attitude and not making a bunch of kids cry. That's pretty good actually.

Dismissing our sin in ways like that, if we really hold to our biblical theology of God and his attributes, namely that he

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is sovereign over all things, then every time that we justify any part of our sin by pointing to the difficult circumstances that drew it out of us, then we are engaged in a similar type of behavior to what James is, is going after right here. A type of blaming God. The point that we see here is that every single trial that we go through is also a place where temptation to sin will certainly be present. But we need to draw a distinction between the trial and the temptation to sin and God's purposes in the trial. One can easily lead to the other.

The trial can easily lead to the temptation. But even though both concepts are represented by the same Greek word, the two concepts do not equal each other. God does test us. He does put us through trials, but he does not tempt us to sin. He knowingly puts us in situations where temptation to sin will be stronger than if we were not in those situations. But his intention in those situations is not for us to sin, but for us to grow. Right, we immediately, passages from the Old Testament come to mind. We were directly told that God is putting his people to the test.



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In Judges 2 we read about God's intention to test Israel by leaving some of the idolatrous nations that Joshua didn't conquer around them. God says, I'm going to do this in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did or not. So he gives them this test and not to set them up for failure, but to give them the opportunity to demonstrate that they would take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did, to expose what they need to see in their own hearts. More famously, in Genesis 22:1 and 2 we read that clear statement, "After these things God tested Abraham."

He tells him to take his son to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him, offer him as a sacrifice. And again, the point of this test is to demonstrate to Abraham and to all, all who would hear the story of Abraham, including us throughout time, the incredible faith of Abraham. Not because there was any part of God that actually desired Abraham to murder his son. Because it is one thing for the Bible to tell us that Abraham was a man of exemplary faith, and another thing to demonstrate it through a test. So God tests us, but he does not tempt us.

So hopefully now as we look at this and think about everything that we have already discussed up to this point in James 1, we have an answer for that question that pops into our mind all the time. Why did God place me in this situation even though he knows how likely I am going to be to fall into temptation to sin here? Why would he do that? Well, the answer is that those same situations, the same situations where temptation to sin is usually the strongest, are the exact same trials, the exact same test that God desires to use to help you grow in steadfastness and maturity.

Apart from them, you wouldn't actually sin less. You would actually find that you sin easier and you would find that more in future situations in the consistent character of God. He intends our trials for our growth in holiness. He intends our trials for, for our growth in holiness. He intends them for our good. It is our sinful flesh that uses them for an occasion to sin.

And that is what we see in point two, the origin of temptation, the origin of temptation. And for the first part of

this point, I just want to kind of continue on that thought process that we just ended point one with. So you could probably subdivide point two into, into two sub-points. Point, sub-point A would be from where temptation cannot come and sub point B would be from where temptation does come. So to the person who is either directly or indirectly making the accusation that they are being tempted by God or that it is somehow his fault the temptation has come upon them or come upon him. And even and maybe even worse, come to the conclusion that he somehow then God somehow then shares the blame for my sin.

To that person not only does James say God does not tempt us, but even stronger he says that God cannot tempt us. So here he is making an appeal to the character of God. He's saying get, get that thought, anything that even sounds like that thought. Get that far from you. Banish that thought, because the moment you start thinking like that, the moment that you start blaming circumstances or excusing or minimizing your sin because of the difficult trial that you are going through, you begin to tread dangerously close to blasphemy. This is, this is a command from James. "Let no one say." Let no one say this. Even though James

is here posing an argument from a hypothetical critic. James commands that this type of language cannot be in our vocabulary.

I think we go too easy on ourselves here. We, we maybe know that we shouldn't develop a sinful, angry, bitter attitude in the midst of a trial, even a minor trial, like not getting the weather we want or not having the room temperature the way that we want, that we speak, and we sometimes act as if God is not sovereign. And we justify our attitude because outside forces have driven us to the point. We don't even consider that we in that moment, we in that moment are actually impugning the character of God. We're, we're blaming God for our temptation, even if it's indirectly by blaming something that he holds sovereign control over.

It is, it is quite similar to saying alongside Adam, was that the woman, the woman whom you gave me. That, that's why I attempted. She gave me the fruit and I ate the fruit. The word that is translated as cannot be tempted is an adjective that means, that means even more literally, without temptation, God is without temptation. The idea is that God stands completely

apart from temptation. He cannot be affected by it, and he cannot be connected to it because temptation is connected with a desire for sin and evil, and this is literally just outside of God and who he is.

God is, as some have said, unversed in sin. He has no experience of it whatsoever. He is entirely free from it. His observation and contact with sin comes from a place of pure holiness. It is totally apart from how we observe sin. How we observe sin is, is with an ability to be drawn toward it or changed in our motives and desires by it. That is not God's relationship with sin in any way.

So far be it from us then, who know that this is the God that we serve, that who know that this is the truth about who He is. Far be it from us to know that, and then begin to complain about our circumstances as if they are temptations from God to sin, or as if somehow there's circumstances that God is not in control of. And then we begin to treat God in a similar way as every false God that man has ever invented.

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All the false gods that we see in Hinduism and other Eastern religions, as well as the Roman and Greek pantheon of gods, they exist as beings of, of maybe extreme power, but beings who are nonetheless still free to sin and to manipulate people into sin and tempt people towards sin. And that's because those gods aren't gods. They're the creation of sinful man. And we can't, when we're thinking of gods, we can't help but put sin in them.

But the God of the Bible is not invented by man. He stands far apart from all false gods. He does not bring storms and circumstances into our lives like the Greek gods did in order to serve a sinful, manipulative end. He has not been affected by the evil of another in such a way that he lashes out in revenge. It is impossible for him to react to anything we do. God does not react, he simply acts. He is pure action. He acts according to His own will at all times. God cannot tempt us towards sin because he cannot act in a way that goes against his perfect character, because any deviation from a perfect character would mean that he has changed and therefore could not be considered immutable, could not be considered perfect, and therefore could not be God.

So God is again literally without temptation. So that also means, as James says just before this, that God cannot be tempted. So he says God cannot be tempted. He that's almost, that's like the ground proof for his statement that that God cannot tempt. God himself cannot be tempted, so there is no way that he could tempt another. That is how outside of temptation God stands. And this also makes sense within the character of God.

Since temptation appeals to our necessities and our cravings for that which we feel we lack, or something that we need to make us happy in any given moment, then it is impossible for God to experience temptation in any form. It is impossible for God to be tempted since he is fully sufficient in himself. He has no needs. He has no perceived lack to be tempted by, and therefore no desire for a perceived lack of something at all. There's nothing for temptation to cling to in God. If there was anything again that God could be tempted to try and obtain, then once again he could not be God because God cannot be described as one who has an unfulfilled desire, and he would no longer be fully sufficient in himself.

And the most obvious characteristic that we think about of God that would be violated if he was able to tempt or to be tempted would be his perfect holiness. The reason that we can be tempted towards sin is because there exists in each of us a propensity towards sin and evil that exists within us and within our sinful flesh that still clings to us. Because of this, temptation can use those sinful desires in us as footholds to gain traction and to hook us. But in God there is absolutely no weakness in his nature. There is nothing for a sinful desire to hook onto or to grab hold of.

So kind of an analogy, if we if we think of temptation as something that tries to grab a hold of some area of weakness in our life to get a hold of us, like scaling a mountain, our own sinful desires that still remain in us, they act as foot in hand holds for sin to gain traction in our lives. So, so in this picture then, sanctification for us is actually the process of filing those footholds down and smoothing them out.



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But to a perfectly holy God, it would be like trying to climb an inverted plane of glass. There's simply nothing for temptation to grab a hold of. It just slides off with no effect and no ability to, to affect him whatsoever. So in the experience and existence of God, there is no type of movement or draw toward evil. And one who is totally clear from evil in every way cannot possibly incite evil because that would necessitate some sort of desire for sin, which would in itself also be sin.

So as we think about trials and temptation and where it comes from, James wants to kill any negative connection that we might make between God and temptation. Any type of direct or indirect blame, we might actively or passively assigned to God. Even though temptations like trials are promised to us, they are a certainty and they will be stronger during the time of trial. And James, by banishing this thought from our thinking, is just further solidifying the goodness of God in his design for our trials, which he has been teaching throughout this first chapter. And it's actually a point that we'll return to in the verses that we're going to look at next time in James.

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The fact that some of the worst sins that you may have ever committed or that some life dominating practice of sin might be able to, you might be able to trace their beginning back to a temptation that you experienced during one of the most difficult moments of your life. The fact that, that may be true should have no bearing on how you understand trials and your ability to obey the command to count them as joy. Because all of the sin that might have come about from falling into temptation in that trial was a result of your weakness and the exact opposite of God's intention for you in a trial. His intention, as we have said, is to strengthen and mature us, to come to trust him more and depend on him more. It's our own sinful desires took that test of God and turned it into an occasion for sin.

That brings us to that second sub-point. So we've talked about from where temptation cannot come. Now let's look at the second sub-point from where temptation does come. Look again at verse 14, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." So here we see the true origin of our temptation. It's our own desires. It is your own desire that leads you to temptation, to sin.

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The word desire doesn't always. The word that's translated to desire doesn't necessarily have to refer to a sinful desire. Some translations put the word evil desires in there, that there's no adjective for the word evil that's actually attached there. But the wording in verses 14 and 15 do indicate that James has in mind a whole picture of, of sin kind of being personified as an adulterous woman, kind of like in Proverbs 5, enticing someone into sin.

So, so translations that say evil, they're not, they're not trying to go against what the text says. Translations that say evil or maybe use that stronger sin indicating word lust, they're, they're not wrongly translating, they're just trying to help the English reader make that connection. But we do need to acknowledge that desire doesn't, doesn't necessarily have to lead to sin and it doesn't necessarily have to be sinful. So what you do with that desire, what that desire is for. So just as the desire to, to eat is a good desire, God puts that in you so you don't die. But it can lead to the temptation toward gluttony.

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The desire for many things might be good initially, but, but lead to temptations for various forms of sinful discontentment, for lust, and for selfish comfort seeking. So in the case of trials, we have a natural desire to be free from pain and hurt. Which isn't necessarily bad, but that desire can lead to all sorts of sinful temptations to complain or to find sinful compromises, to find some sort of sinful temporary satisfaction.

So we do want to acknowledge that desires don't necessarily have to be sinful, but even those desires can lead to sinful temptation. And it does seem that James is referring here to sin, the sinful or evil desires that we have or lust. And to depict the actual origin of our temptation, he uses a fishing metaphor. With those words lured and enticed. They're supposed to remind us of fishing.

James is once again using an illustration to make his point stronger. We really are to see the picture of a fish noticing the bait on the hook and being drawn to it. Fish is enticed and then hooked and then drawn away. So this is the picture. James

is saying, the origin of temptation is not in the one who placed the bait on the hook, or even in the bait itself. It is in the desire of the one who moves toward that bait.

So, Satan the tempter, he may place the bait in front of us, Other people might place the bait in front of us. The circumstances might place the bait in front of us. But the bait is not where the temptation begins. It is the desire for it, the fact that we notice it and then move toward it. And the fact that James doesn't mention Satan here is not a denial of, of Satan's existence or of his role as tempter, as some have indicated James, as James believes.

No, James is just trying to emphatically make the point that we are not to shift the blame off of ourselves when it comes to the origin of temptation. He wants us to keep looking inward, not outward. When it comes to temptation, we need to look at the root issue, which is our own desires. So Satan, others, and circumstances might put all kinds of things in front of us, but they do not put anything into us. Don't put anything

inside of us that wasn't already there. They merely draw out what has been there the whole time.

Another helpful key to understanding the origin of temptation is seen at the end of verse 14, where it, where it says that, each person is lured and enticed by his own desire, by his own desire. And this is the reminder that while temptation is the common experience for every person, the sinful desire that leads to temptation in each of us has a certain maybe unique quality for each individual. Some things might bring about a strong temptation in me that would have no effect on you and vice versa.

Reading some of the, the news about all of the sin to acquire concert tickets to, to Taylor Swift. To steal people stealing them or participating in some sort of scam or fighting people at the box office, giving into the sin to do that, that bait has no effect on me. I can swim right on by that hook. In fact. In fact, I'd be far more tempted to lie to get out of going to the concert for free.

There, there are certain temptations that are based on certain desires that are much stronger in some than they are in others. We've all had that feeling about someone we know, right? You've had that feeling where you wonder, how on earth did they fall into that sin, that sin? Why is it so hard for them to swim past that bait? That's also true that you have been the subject of that thought in others. We've had that same thought toward you, and that's why this reminder is so good for us in the church.

Helps us minister to one another and love one another better, knowing that this is exactly how sinful temptation originates. That this person is struggling with their own desires. It's a particular set of probably temptation combinations that might be like yours in some ways and different than others. And knowing this really helps us to love and minister to each other, hold each other accountable, spur one another on within the church.

That's one of the reasons that God places us all together so that I can help people with a desire that maybe doesn't or

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maybe used to pose a strong temptation on my life, but no longer does. And people who are no longer tempted by the things that, that get me into trouble, you can help me with my temptation. It's a call here. I see a call here to be thankful also for the church. Not a direct call, but it's something that came to my mind as I was reading through this.

So the origin of temptation is clear. With that in mind, let's quickly, let's look quickly then at a third Point in our outline, the progression of temptation, the progression of temptation. So again, 14 and 15, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

So James continues on by using this metaphor of the process of bringing forth a child. This idea of bringing forth a child. And we're not to take away any type of negative connotations about having a child from this. James isn't anti children. He's simply using this illustration to demonstrate that this is a, a natural process that's once it's started, it continues on to the



end that it naturally leads to, just as the conception of the child leads to the birth of the child, to the, to the growth of that person into adulthood and eventually to the point of their death. And it's all set in motion at conception just like that. So also the conception of sin ultimately leads also to a type of death.

Although I don't think it's James' intent to walk us through stages here necessarily. You can see the progression that begins with temptation. So first I see something that I want, something that I desire. It's possible that it's a sinful desire, but not necessarily. And then sin is conceived when that desire, when my desire for this thing surpasses my desire to please and honor God. And I decide, make a decision, make a plan to sin in order to fill my desire. Maybe I decide to, to steal something to get what I want. Maybe I decide to deceive someone to get it. Maybe I decide to lash out at someone to feel better about myself.

But some form of plan on how I'm going to fulfil my sinful desire begins to manifest. And the whole time it's ignoring

God's word. And then it leads to the actual transgression. So the sin is already, that has already begun in my thought life, but now I go ahead and follow through with it. And all of this can take place over some time or in a moment, but the one certainty is that it finally leads to death.

Death and separation from God are the natural result of sin. It is what sin always naturally brings forth. Just as the conception of a person is the first step, step towards physical death, so the conception of sin is the first step of what will lead to spiritual death. So what we need to see here is, is the contrasting paths where our trials where our testing of our faith can lead us. That, that really is James's point in this.

The language James uses here in, in these verses, in verses 13 through 15 very clearly implies that he wants us to see this section in contrast to God's purposes for our trials in verses 2 through 4. There's a lot of connection in the language there. If, if I mean you can go home and look at them together next to each other, but he's using the same type of language talking

about that which naturally is produced leading onto a type of a type, a different type of maturity in both sections.

So one leads to maturity in Christ and the other leads to fully grown sin or maturity in sin. One leads to death and then verse 12, one leads to the crown of life. So whenever you face a trial of any sort, whether it is as significant as a, as a life changing medical diagnosis or just an inconvenience like, like burning your dinner, in each of those situations you are going to face temptation to sin. The temptation might be stronger sometimes or weaker sometimes based on, on who you are and what desires are strongest in you. And also if you in that moment give into the temptation following a sinful desire, then acting upon that desire, you are going to grow weaker in your desire to follow Christ.

You're gonna grow callous. You're gonna grow calluses that make it easier to, to grow in your sin as you follow that temptation process. And the thing that matures and grows in you is going to be not Christ likeness, but sin. And that sin when it is fully mature, fully grown, leads to death and separation

from God. And that is the state for all of those who remain in their sin.

So that's, that's what happens though, that, that's what happens though in your trial when you ignore God's purpose and when you follow the path to temptation, you end up there if you just keep going. So that, that's one path that you could go down in your trial. But God's intention for you Christian in the trial is that you would endure in the temptation using the way out that he's promised to each of us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 where he says, "No temptation is overtaking you that is not common to man. God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

That's his purpose, that you would refuse the temptation to sin in the trial and instead count it as joy and look for the opportunity to grow in your trial. That instead of sin coming to maturity in your life, the testing of your faith will produce steadfastness. And as it has its full effect, it leads not to death, but to being perfect. To be, to being made complete. To

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being made into one who lacks nothing. And like we talked about last week, it leads to the crown of life.

One of the commentaries I looked at, it briefly mentioned the sailboat analogy, but didn't really expand on it. But I thought it's, it's a perfect analogy to expand on about this situation. We, we can understand our trials as, as the wind and us as a, as a boat. And so the wind pushes us naturally in one direction and as human beings our natural direction, our natural reaction to trials, all testing, all difficulty, is to move in the natural way it is pushing us. And that's to sin, to complain, to argue, to have a bad attitude, to blame someone else, to feel sorry for ourselves, to invite the attention and sympathy of others, to make it all about us.

That is the natural way to go. If you don't do anything in your trial, that is the easy way to go. So if you're a sailboat in the middle of the water, you will naturally go in that direction if you're not active. But a Christian should be growing through trials to become like an experienced sailor. Because an experienced sailor is able to maneuver the sails in

such a way that they are able to catch the same wind that is naturally pushing them in a different direction. To catch that wind and use it to propel them forward with more strength and speed than they would ever possibly hope to attain if there were no wind at all.

I think that's a that's a really helpful illustration of how James wants his readers to be thinking about trial and temptation as they get to this part of the letter. James wants us to see and be aware of both of these directions, that our trials can lead us toward growth in maturity in Christ or temptation to sin. To be aware of these two paths so that we can be wise in our trials. So that we might grow and mature like a sailor, who, over the course of his life just gets better and better at recognizing the wind blowing against his face and is able to take joy in it because he knows that even though it might be easier with no wind, he will be a lot closer to his goal when the wind dies down than he would have been with no wind at all.

So this, this teaching of James of these two directions and in our determination to move toward maturity in Christ is so helpful in our trials, especially early on in our trials. So helpful for us to think of these things early on in our trials so that we force ourselves at the beginning of our trials to start asking tough questions. Which path do I look like I'm on in this trial so far?

So it would be a great application for all of us to get in the practice of immediately, immediately when we find ourselves in a trial. Find ourselves in a time of testing. To not react right away, but just to pause and identify, here's a trial, here's a test, what are the potential temptations that are going to try and lure me away from God's good purpose for me in this trial? Where are they? What do they look like to be aware of them and then seek God's wisdom to lead you away from them and towards obedience towards righteousness in the trial? Because the thing that's far worse than going through a trial is wasting one. So that's, that's one very good and useful application.

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Another helpful application when it comes to this teaching on temptation. And the one I want to, to leave you with is to ask you to really think through the implications that the power of temptation in your life is directly related to your desires. That's where temptations power lies. This means simply that the key to living the obedient Christian life, especially in time of trial, the key to being the type of Christian that we all hope to be, the one that's steadfast in the face of trials, is directly related to our desires.

So think about this. If the root of temptation was actually located in Satan, then we would be powerless to do anything about it in our lives because we have no control over Satan. If the root of temptation was actually located in other people, we could maybe do a little bit, but overall we could do little to stop it because we are we largely don't have control over what other people say and do. And if the root of temptation was actually located in circumstances and a similar thing, we might be able to do something about it in some situations, but most circumstances are out of our control, and we would find ourselves once again helpless and in the end unchanged.



And even the circumstances that we do have control over, which is not necessarily bad to adjust circumstances to avoid sin if we can, but changing external factors might momentarily assist us in our fight against temptation. But we can't let that deceive us that some real change has actually occurred. We can't know that until our desires have actually changed.

So taking away a thief's opportunity to steal by placing him in a jail cell might keep him from stealing, but it hasn't changed him. So it is extremely helpful for us to know that the root of our temptation is not Satan, it's not others, it's not circumstances. And it's good for us to know that because there's nothing that we can ultimately do in those situations. But in fact, the root of temptation is in our desires, and our desires can be changed.

So it's so helpful for us to know that when you find yourself in sin, whether it's sinful thinking, sinful speaking, sinful actions, you, you can always look back and see, you can find that place of conception, see that desire. What desire conceived this sin? Why was that bait so attractive to me? And

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then, and then guess what? When, when you do that, you don't have to go, that's just who I am. That's, that's just, those are just the type of things I like. That's what appeals to me. I wish it wasn't so. I wish that wasn't so controlling in my life. I wish that wasn't so important to me, but it is.

Your desires can change, Christian. You are not a slave to them. You're a slave to Christ. You can mortify old sinful desires and replace them with new, stronger, righteous desires, and we all know that that's how it's supposed to be. We heard testimonies regarding those things this morning. Things they once desired, sports, once desired alcohol once desired. Something else. Inherently sinful or not, that was my primary desire, the thing that I wanted the most. The desire for those things was stronger than other things, and they would sacrifice time and energy for those things. But now, and you heard it at the end of the testimonies, it's not so much that they tried to stop desiring those other things so much as it, as it is that a new desire came in and supplanted those things.

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Now they desire reading the word, desire being a part of the church, desire righteousness more than all of those things. And as long as they, and as long as we take those desires and we're feeding those good desires, those are the desires that are going to keep growing in us. That's, that's what we have to do now. So do you have a desire for something else more than church or something else more than reading scripture or, or more than communion, or more than righteousness? More than closeness to the Lord, more than obedience to him, more than becoming like Jesus?

I'm not asking what do you know should be most important. I'm saying, what is it that you actually desire the most? What does the pattern of your life demonstrate that those things actually are? When you're honest with yourself, what do you truly desire the most? What dominates your affections the most? Why is it that and not something else? And I think you'll find that a big part of it is, that is the desire that you feed. If your desires are often, stop feeding those desires and feed new ones. There was a time as a child when I actually liked fast food more than a well prepared, well-seasoned steak. The more I ate steak, the more my desire for steak grew, and as a result my

desire for Chicken McNuggets became so weak that the, the point of, of almost nonexistence now.

That's the principle behind the, the famous phrase used by Thomas Chalmers. I think it's first used by him. "The explosive power of a new affection." The best way to put your old desires to death is with the expulsive power of a new affection. To feed a new affection. Again that's, that's what we heard this morning. I once lived for this thing, but now I live for Christ and I find far more satisfaction, far more joy in living for him and doing the things of God than I ever found in those other things.

So, Christian, take a good hard look at your desires. Spend some time this week doing that. Examine the last times you've fallen into sin. Think through what gets the most of your time and affection. Take a good hard look at your desires. Look for that which is not of Christ. The desires that make temptation to sin so much easier, whether they be desires that are inherently sinful desires or desires that may not be inherently sinful but

take up far too much of your time and energy that should be reserved for God.

And then make a concerted effort to refuse to feed those desires with your time, energy, and attention. And instead of feed the desires that you know ought to be the strongest in your life. I'm not sure who this, this will help, but probably the two most spiritually impactful things that I've ever done in my life are stopping watching football every Sunday and stopping playing video games. Stop feeding those desires and put my time and energy into something else and something better.

When you understand the connection of trials to times of strongest temptation, when you see that connection that James is making here and you understand that the power of temptation is in our desires. If you can really get that and apply that, it can have such a powerful effect on your life and in your growth in godliness. And you too, friend, you too may find that your decision to stop going to a certain website where you spend all your time to stop watching a certain TV show, to stop playing video games, to stop watching football.

You may find that, that becomes the key decision in your life that brings you to the place where you are able to finally be the type of mature Christian that you've, you've always kind of thought was impossible for you. The one who truly does count it as joy because you understand who God is. You can count it as joy when the most severe of trials come. When a loved one dies, or when you're diagnosed with cancer, you face some sort of debilitating financial crisis. Making the decision to really work on changing your desires is all that might be separating you from being the, being the type of person who knows they ought to count trials as joy. The type of person who knows they should remain steadfast under trial. To the type of person who actually does those things. Change from one who merely knows the one who truly is.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you for the, what you revealed to us in your word. The truth of your word. These things that we, we would never just come to these types of positions without you showing them to us in your word.

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Father God, I pray that you would, for those in here who, who do not know you, who do not know you, and maybe, maybe the pattern of their life of constantly giving into temptation to sin as they've sat here and thought about that, maybe that's now been revealed to them. But I'm no slave of Christ. I'm a slave to sin, Father, that you might use what we've talked about today to, to bring them to conviction that they would see their desperate need for the Savior you've provided in Jesus Christ, Lord, that you'd grant them faith and repentance.

And God for, for the rest of us in here, for those who are believers, I pray you'd use the words that we, that we looked at today to, to embolden us to strengthen us in our trials. To be more alert, more aware to our own sinful desires. To, to deeply search and root them out. To be far from them. Any places where, where, where maybe we've been excusing ourselves by minimizing, excusing ourselves in our sin, by minimizing your sovereignty.

And God, I pray that you would help us to, to, a to flee from temptation and to do that by, by starting to, to examine

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our desires, to take those old desires, to kill them and to feed new desires, new righteous desires. That we would each long to follow you and be willing to put off whatever we need to in this life. It's all of our focus, all of our attention. That when any trial comes, no matter how severe it is, we, we will be able to joyfully sing the words we're about to sing. That it is well with our soul. Pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.