

Lesson 3 James 1:13-18

How to handle Temptations

Memory verse: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” 1 Cor. 10:13

The mature person is patient in trials. Sometimes the trials are testings on the outside, and sometimes they are temptations on the inside. Trials may be tests sent by God, or they may be temptations sent by Satan and encouraged by our own fallen nature. It is this second aspect of trials - temptations on the inside - that James dealt with in this section.

We may ask, “Why did James connect the two? What is the relationship between testings without and temptations within?” Simply this: if we are not careful, the testings on the outside may become temptations on the inside. When our circumstances are difficult, we may find ourselves complaining against God, questioning His love, and resisting His will. At this point, Satan provides us with an opportunity to escape the difficulty.

This opportunity is a temptation. There are many illustrations of this truth found in the Bible. Abraham arrived in Canaan and discovered a famine there. He was not able to care for his flocks and herds. This trial was an opportunity to prove God; but Abraham turned it into a temptation and went down to Egypt. God had to chasten Abraham to bring him back to the place of obedience and blessing.

While Israel was wandering in the wilderness, the nation often turned testings into temptations and tempted the Lord. No sooner had they been delivered from Egypt than their water supply vanished and they had to march for three days without water. When they did find water, it was so bitter they could not drink it. Immediately they began to murmur and blame God. They turned their testing into a temptation, and they failed.

As we approach this text, verse 14, begins with these words, but every man is tempted. All of us can give testimony to the truthfulness of that statement. Everyone is tempted. Temptation is the common experience of every human being. Non-Christian or Christian. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 that temptations are common to man. One ancient writer said that even when we are saved, we must remember that our baptism did not drown our flesh. Temptation is common to every man. Every man is tempted.

James has said that the person who endures those trials is blessed. Those trials, we learned are outward circumstances, which test our faith and produce spiritual growth. But those trials can also become temptations. And rather than being a means to spiritual growth can become a source of solicitation to evil. Every difficult thing that comes into my life either strengthens me because I obey God and stay confident in his care and trusting his power and so I grow or I am tempted to doubt God, deny his word, disobey, do what is expedient and thus, I have fallen to the solicitation to do evil.

Certainly, God does not want us to yield to temptation, yet neither can He spare us the experience of temptation. We are not God’s sheltered people; we are God’s scattered people. If we are to mature, we must face testings and temptations. You will be surprised to know that God provides barriers to temptations so that we can overcome!

Things to learn: 1) the Judgment of God 2) the Goodness of God 3) the Divine Nature of God

Discussion Questions:

1) The Judgement of God seemed negative to humanity but it is necessary to understand the consequence of sin. Discuss the four stages in the process of sin found in verses 13 to 16 which are desire, deception, disobedience and death.

2) In verse 17, it gives us a hint that the goodness of God is a barrier to temptations. How would you use that to help you resist temptations?

3) Verse 18 gives us the nature of God’s divine nature and our “new birth”. How can we use this verse to handle temptations and also appreciate God’s help too?