

Review: Lesson 2 on James 1:2-12 was about the facts of temptations and trials - who encounters them, the attitude to have, and the way to conquer. Our essential attitude is to be JOY. We learned about wisdom and what constitutes faith.

We were encouraged to remember that:

- Faith is a gift from God.
- Faith is always tested, proven and tried by fire
- Trials work **for** us as believers and not against us
- Trials can be faced with joy because when infused with faith, perseverance results.
- As perseverance develops then maturity results
- Mature Christians are faithful, patient, persistent – we endure with the help of God – lacking in nothing.

As we learned the way to conquer trials, we were shown that everyone needs to ask God for WISDOM; not the wisdom(knowledge) of the world but the wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit. We found that once we admit in our hearts that our knowledge is not enough – we needed God’s wisdom for our journey. But asking wasn’t enough – it must be without any doubt, wavering, staggering, looking back or being double-minded (up and down) – we have to ask with a clean heart and a committed conscience to His Word and Son, Jesus. Knowing that God will not work in us without our consent – a surrendered will.

We then reviewed our status – that whether of rich or humble circumstances we are committed to a life with Jesus as our center – persevering in and through the trials that each of us encounter.

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Temptations & Trials

The Basic Facts – James 1:13-27

Origin / Preparation

1¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted 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 is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be 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 shifting shadow. ¹⁸ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man

will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶ If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

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## The Origin of Trials, Temptations 1.13-18

All believers are in danger of falling under the attacks and pressures of trials. But we are also subject to falling before the attractions and pleasures of temptation. Just as a wrong reaction to testing will obstruct our spiritual growth and maturity, so will a wrong response to temptation.

**Warren Wiersbe** - 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.

(BE Series Commentary)

*<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.*

**Tempted [g3985 peirazō]** to test, entice, discipline, attempt – to try or test one's faith, virtue, character, by enticement to sin

James is giving us a sharp rebuke at the beginning of this verse - **Let no one say**. To the early believers, as well as to us today, we seek to free ourselves from responsibility and may say or think that ‘I am being tempted by God’ or ‘It's from God’ – thereby placing the origin of their trial or temptation on The Lord. They looked at Scripture and saw the hard command to sacrifice his son that God gave to Abraham in **Genesis 22:1**. They read **Job 1 & 2** and see that God gave Satan permission to afflict the righteous man called Job. They read of God sending tests as forms of judgment upon those who have rejected Him, such as sending a deceiving spirit to the worldly prophets to bring deception in **1 Kings 22:19-23**. Or even of having God's Spirit depart from King Saul, and then he conjures up Samuel and complains that God refuses to answer him **1 Samuel 29:15-16**. And yet God did not tempt but tested for their choice.

The OT Hebrew word ‘nissah’ which is rendered ‘tempt’ literally means ‘to try, prove, or put to the test’. In each instance when this verb is used, we must distinguish who is the one who tempts – and then we shall understand whether the meaning is to endeavor to lead a person to fall, which is always the purpose of Satan as he tempts us, or whether it is God who never tricks us or deceives us or causes us to fall, but rather tests to prove our progress.

Even with all of these examples from Scripture do we not find that God enticed or solicited any person to do evil... nor will He do so in our day. Tests are not temptations from God for He does not solicit or entice to evil.

“Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God’s side, and a temptation from Satan’s side, just as Job suffered from Satan, and it was a temptation; but he also suffered from God through Satan, and so it was a trial to him.” (Charles Spurgeon)

The subject now shifts from holy trials which are designed to bring out the best in us, to unholy temptations which will bring out the worst in us. Also note that James says *when he is tempted* - we will be tempted and tested and tried, it certainly is going to happen to each of us. We are being warned with this word ‘*when*’ and James wants us to know and know clearly that **when** we are tempted into sin – it does not come from God.

James makes it clear that **God cannot be tempted**. Temptation to sin or to commit any form of evil is not of God. He Himself has no dealings with evil or by evil, and God does not and will not entice us to sin.

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*<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. <sup>15</sup> Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. <sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

**Lust [g1939 epithymia]** a longing, craving, desire - especially for what is forbidden

We are always ready to shift responsibility for our sins, it has not changed in the nearly 2000 years since James was written and it amazingly has not changed since Adam and Eve tried to convince God that their sin was someone or something else’s fault.

In our ‘advanced’ modern society the approach now is to say that sin is a sickness, or part of the culture, or the new normal. When we cannot blame God, we will find whatever substitute we can to shift blame away from us. But sin is not a sickness or normal or ‘the devil made me do it’. Some will try to blame inanimate things for sinning – but material things are not sinful in themselves. Sin does not begin there. James says that sin comes from within us – from our old, evil, fallen, unregenerate nature. Jesus said in **Matthew 15:19** <sup>19</sup> *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.* – it is moral failure for which man must and will give account.

We must believe that every one of us is tempted, temptation is inevitable – no one escapes it. We all have impure appetites that urge us toward sin. **Psalms 7:14** <sup>14</sup> *Behold, he travails with wickedness, And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood. Isaiah 59:4 <sup>4</sup> *No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly. They trust in confusion and speak lies; They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity..* So, does that mean that we are helpless victims enticed by our own lusts? Absolutely not – with the help of God Almighty, we are to stay away from evil, those who traffic in it, and expel those thoughts of sin.*

The early believers had Scripture that warned them **Proverbs 18:10** <sup>10</sup> *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.* And there are more verses in Scripture that would help one to focus on righteousness not sin. Later, Paul said in **Philippians 4:8** <sup>8</sup> *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

So, if we have these wonderful Scriptures warning us, teaching us, sometimes scaring us – do we sin? The answer is in vs 15 *‘when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin’*. Instead of expelling the evil from our minds though, we might encourage it, nourish it, even enjoy it. If we think about a forbidden act long enough... we will eventually do it. Temptation is of every human since the fall – of his own lusts or evil desires. James is saying that lust conceives, and a hideous baby named SIN is born.

**Accomplished [g0658 apoteleō]** to complete entirely, consummate, finish. To bring to an end

And when sin is accomplished, when it is full-grown – it brings forth death. **Romans 5:12** <sup>12</sup>  
*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 6:23a* <sup>23</sup> *For the wages of sin is death....*

Sin is not a barren, sterile thing but it produces more and more sin. Satan loves to take routine wants and turn them into full blown desires. Adam’s fall into sin led to the introduction of physical death into creation from his time forward. But sin also leads to eternal, spiritual death – the final separation of a person from God and His blessing.

There is a sense also in which sin results in death for a believer. For instance, in 1 Timothy 5:6 we read that a believing widow who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. This means that she is wasting her life and utterly failing to fulfill the purpose for which God saved her. To be out of fellowship with God is for a Christian a form of living death **1 Timothy 5:6** <sup>6</sup> *But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.* (Believer’s Bible Commentary)

Why does James tell us to *“not be deceived”*? For one thing, we deceive ourselves. We refuse to be accountable and blame God or Satan or others instead – for our sin, for our circumstances, for the way we are made, for the things we think, the choices we have made. This is self-deception, this is me focusing on me – I become my own god and I fall into sin. Another reason is that Satan’s strategy in deception and temptation of all kinds is to convince us that pursuing our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us.

James tells his beloved brethren to not be deceived, to remember Jesus words **John 10:10** <sup>10</sup> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.* If we remember His words we can more effectively resist the deceptions (and there are many) of temptation.

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*<sup>17</sup> 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 shifting shadow. <sup>18</sup> In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.*

*Every good thing given* This is both what is given, the perfect gift, and the very act of giving is from God. Every good and perfect gift is from The Lord.

There is no change, no shifting, no reversing, no inconsistency in God. Also, no changes in our world can cast a shadow on the unchanging God – the Fount of Light, the Father of lights.. He is the source of ALL light in the universe – physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. He is the creator. He does not change, as He is incapable of change or being changed by the action of others.

**Psalms 136:7** <sup>7</sup> *To Him who made the great lights, For His lovingkindness is everlasting*

**Malachi 3:6** <sup>6</sup> “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Temptation is not God’s nature, therefore it is unthinkable that God would ever entice man to sin. Temptation comes from man’s own sinful nature. So, as we reflect for a minute on these truths, ask yourself – do you encourage evil thoughts to linger, or do you expel them quickly? When you sin, do you claim that you just couldn’t help it? Do you blame God when you are tempted to sin?

*In the exercise of His will* God wills to see us reborn. James tells us that God was not forced to do it by any merit in us – because after the fall, there was and would never be merit in us. And yet, God’s will for us is that we are reborn **John 1:13** <sup>13</sup> *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* **John 3:3** <sup>3</sup> *Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* It was totally voluntary on the part of God to do anything to save us. The new birth is described as God “*brought us forth*”. By this spiritual birth we became His children – a relationship which cannot be changed since a birth can never be redone.

James had only the Old Testament and the Words of Jesus as his reference when he said that ‘*He brought us forth by the word of truth*’. **John 14:6** <sup>6</sup> *Jesus \*said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

Later Paul affirms ‘the word of truth’ in **2 Corinthians 6:7** <sup>7</sup> *in the word of truth, in the power of God* **Ephesians 1:13** <sup>13</sup> *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise* **2 Timothy 2:15** <sup>5</sup> *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.* Today we can know and can see that this word of truth spoken by Jesus, James and the apostles is the very foundation of the Bible – the instrument by which we know the way of salvation.

The Christians that James was writing to were among the first believers in the Christian world, and he referred to them as the ‘*a kind of first fruits among His creatures*’. These were the first to be reborn of God, offered to God in gratitude and in recognition that all comes from Him and belongs to Him, and the promise of a greater harvest to come over the ages, with the greatest harvest of souls for Jesus Christ to reap in full when He returns to reign over the earth. So, a good question at this point is Do you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Are you like ready for Christ’s harvest?

**Romans 8:19-23** <sup>9</sup> *For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.* <sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope* <sup>21</sup> *that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* <sup>22</sup> *For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.* <sup>23</sup> *And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

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The preparations necessary to withstand of trials, temptations 1.19-27

¹⁹ *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;* ²⁰ *for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* ²¹ *Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.*

James is going to begin this section on preparation with some imperatives (necessities, must do). Think of these as commands from the Holy Spirit.

Preparation 1 – be *quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger*. These apply most all of the time in our conversations, but James is particularly talking about the Word of God.

We must have an attitude to always be ready *to hear* the Word of God, as well as godly counsel and admonition. We need to be teachable by the Holy Spirit, and that doesn't come without listening.

We need to take a moment before *we speak*, be slow, be cautious, measure our words before they come out of our mouths. **Proverbs 17:27** ²⁷ *He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.* Even nature teaches us this truth...

Epictetus noticed so long ago: "Nature has given to man one tongue, but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak." Solomon would have agreed heartily with James. He once said, "*He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction*" (Prov. 13:3). He also said, "*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise*" (Prov. 10:19). Compulsive talkers eventually transgress. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

This next one, at one time or another, will be a challenge for each of us – even if we have managed to get the first two down pretty well. At one time or another, that 'hot' button will be pushed, and the *anger* will come gushing out. At that point we will be wise to remember that a quick-temper will not produce the kind of righteousness that God expects from His Children. Quickly ask God for help – and mean it! Let God show you if your anger is truly righteous and He wants you to do something – or if you need to shut up and let Him take care of things. **Proverbs 16:32** ³² *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.* I think that most of the time we need to be slow, very slow to anger. **Ecclesiastes 7:9** ⁹ *Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools.* Lest we be thought a fool and give Christians a bad reputation. Jesus said **Matthew 5:22** ²² *But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.*

Putting aside means to put off, lay down, cast off, put away, get rid of. James wants us to rid ourselves of moral sin, filthiness and wickedness. These are vices to be shed as we would a dirty garment that cannot be cleaned and must be disposed of once and for all. Ridding ourselves of impurity (spiritual, mental, physical) and wickedness (evil from our unconverted days).

And then **in humility** [mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness] **receive** the word of God which has been implanted or put into our hearts, saving our very souls.

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²² *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.* ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.* ²⁵ *But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

Preparation 2 . James is telling the early church and now us that we need to *prove* ourselves by getting into the battle and stop being a spectator. Be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only - meanings

Prove [g1096 ginomai] to cause to be, to become

Doer [g4163 poiētēs] a maker, producer, one who obeys or fulfills the law
Hearer [g0202 akroatēs] one who listens

The word for 'doer' characterizes the whole body, personality, one's inner being dedicated to doing that to which they are called – not just to learning God's Word but also faithfully and continually obeying what it says. **Matthew 7:24**²⁴ *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock."*

The word for 'hearer' was used of those who sat passively in an audience and listened to a speaker, heard a singer, or watched a performance. Much like those who audit a college class – attendance is required, study is not. Or those who attend church because of friends or family, they take advantage of the privilege of hearing God's Word; but they have no intention of obeying it, they are pretenders deluding themselves and forgetting what they even hear.

James then shows us an example of one who deludes himself. They look at themselves in a mirror and then forget what they see, or who they might have become, or what kind of person they were. They have derived no benefit from the mirror at all. These could be the casual Bible readers, those who display or even carry their Bible but don't open it. They receive no benefit from being a hearer only, they actually prevent the Holy Spirit from making any progress. **Luke 6:46**⁴⁶ *"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"*

We are called to look intently at God's perfect law, practice its commands, obey its laws, meditate on each chapter and verse – learn by doing! An effectual doer does what God requires of him/her without complaint because they are blessed by God. **John 8:31-32**³¹ *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

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²⁶ *If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.*

Preparation 3 – control the tongue

James shows us one example of those who think they are religious but are being deceived. Those who do not bridle or tame their tongue have a worthless religion – and that is all it is, religion with a façade, a mask. Don't be deceived. Notice what the Psalmist says **Psalms 39:1**¹ *I said, "I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence."* Especially the part about the wicked in his presence... yes, even then we are to control our tongues – God will give us His Words IF He chooses to do so.

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²⁷ *Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

Preparation 4 – practice pure religion

God is looking for those who are compassionately interested in others and keeps their own life clean and undefiled. He wants us to hear the words of Jesus **Matthew 25:35-36**³⁵ *For I was hungry, and you*

gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

To visit the needy, fatherless, widows, orphans ***Psalms 146:9*** ⁹ *The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked.*

To support those who are hungry ***Deuteronomy 14:29*** ²⁹ *The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.*

While we are doing God's work, we are to keep from being corrupted by the world

Titus 2:11-14 ¹¹ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*