

## The Source of Temptation

James 1:13-18

I'm sure you have heard the old saying, "The devil made me do it." Have you ever considered that we might be giving too much credit to Satan?

The other extreme, blaming God for my temptation, is even worse.

Last Sunday we saw the first test presented by James the test of perseverance in suffering in verses 1-12. Today we will receive James' second test: Blame in Temptation. We will do this by exploring the source of temptation as found in James 1:13-18.

### I. Not From God vs. 13

James 1:13, "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;"

From the very first day of our existence mankind has blamed God for our sin and our temptation. When Adam was confronted by God after he had eaten of the forbidden fruit what did Adam say?

Genesis 3:12, "The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Typical man, right? He blames the woman. Ladies, this

is deep biblical truth, right? Sin creates pride and in this case Adam's pride is stopping him from confession, he blames Eve which really is blaming God for providing him a partner. How do you or who do you blame for your temptation?

Adam wasn't the only one tempted. Job was tempted to bail on God when everything was striped away from him. He lost all his children, all his wealth, even his health and yet he didn't turn away from God.

Jesus was even tempted when he went into the wilderness. In this case it was by Satan, but Jesus resisted temptation staying loyal to His Father. Now, Job and Jesus were 2 pretty special people. We aren't typically as strong as Job, are we? And definitely not as strong as Jesus, right? Or are we?

1 Corinthians 10:13, "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."

God is our protector when we find ourselves in temptation, He is not the tempter!

God cannot be tempted, and He doesn't tempt us. Temptation is alien to Him. It is so foreign to Him because it isn't any part of His character. The very idea that God would tempt is anathema. God's holiness completely separates Him from any element of sin and sinfulness.

### II. How we are Tempted vs. 14-15

James 1:14-15, "but each person is tempted when they are

dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Now, this shouldn't surprise us because we know that we are all sinners but even that is being a bit generous towards us. Jeremiah says it best in:

Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

The heart is deceitful above all things, and we put hearts all over our valentines' cards and use it as a symbol of love all over the world. No wonder we are in so much trouble.

Now, you may say that is a generalization, but it doesn't mean your heart is deceitful. Ok, let's take a look at the Apostle Paul. Is Paul's heart deceitful?

Romans 7:18-25, “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work

within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Paul asks the right question, “who will rescue me?” Then he immediately answers his own question, Jesus!

Peter also reflects on this topic in 2 Peter 2. In this chapter Peter says in verse 2, “Many will follow their depraved conduct.”

This is what we see here in James. It's a cycle of lust, which leads to sin, which leads to death. Adultery doesn't begin with someone just running out and jumping into sin. It begins in the heart with a stray look and a thought, just a silly old thought. Then it begins to be a reoccurring thought and it becomes an idea and a desire and a passion and an obsession and a.....sin.

Back in 2 Peter 2 we see how God judged the angels that sinned. How He judged the world in the flood saving only the righteous Noah and his family. We see how He judged Sodom and Gomorrah again only saving Lot and his children. Then notice this:

2 Peter 2:9-10, “if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. 10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings;”

Jumping ahead we read:

2 Peter 2:14, “With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood!”

Then jumping ahead again:

2 Peter 2:18, “For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.”

The progression of sin, the cycle of sin just gets more and more horrible and as we saw in verse 18 it takes others with it.

Jesus warns us about this progression of sin in The Sermon on the Mount when He says,

Matthew 5:27-28, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

We need to guard our hearts against sin when it is in its seed form, not just the full-grown version of sin. What we look at, what we think about, all of this leads us down a path towards destruction.

Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

This brings us to our third point:

III. We are to understand that: vs. 16-18

A. God sends only good and perfect gifts vs. 16-17a

James 1:16-17a, “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above,”

God’s work reflects His character. When God created everything at the end of each day it was declared as good.

Notice that James needs to warn us not to be deceived. We, as humans, can be so tempted to blame God for the bad things that happen to us. It isn’t God, all the bad that happens to us is a result of the fall and introduction of sin into our world. Don’t be deceived!

B. God: vs. 17b-18

James 1:17b-18, “coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”

Here, James teaches us 4 things about God. They are:

1. He is the Father of the heavenly lights vs. 17b

This title, “Father of lights,” is an ancient Jewish title for God reflecting His role as Creator. God created light on the fourth day of creation.

Genesis 1:14-19, “And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the

greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.”

Not only did God create the light we see, but John also points out one characteristic of God in:

1 John 1:5, “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

All of this supports the fact that temptation does not come from God. As John said, there is no darkness in God at all.

The second thing about God:

2. God does not change vs. 17c

Malachi 3:6a, “I the Lord do not change.”

Well, that’s pretty definitive isn’t it! God doesn’t change. But let’s not stop there. The author of Hebrews takes it further:

Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

God the Father doesn’t change, Jesus is the same throughout all history. Again, this supports the fact

that God does not tempt, not in the past, not now and not in the future. His unchanging nature gives us confidence that our temptations aren’t coming from God which means we can trust him.

This is important because it confirms we can trust that God has our best interest in mind and He is reliable as He remains the same.

The third thing about God:

3. God gives us birth through the word of truth vs.18a

Theologians use the term “regeneration” to describe the work of God in our rebirth. Regeneration is completely the work of God. Paul reflects upon this concept in:

Ephesians 4:24, “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

That creation isn’t something we do; it is God working in us.

We didn’t have a say in our physical birth, that was a work enacted by our parents. We weren’t even self-aware for a period of time after our physical birth. For some that may be 16-18 years. It exactly the same with our spiritual birth. It is God acting in our spiritual birth and we are largely unaware of what God is doing in that moment of salvation.

This is what Jesus is teaching Nicodemus in John 3 when Jesus tells Nicodemus that he needs to be born again.

It is also important to notice that this birth comes through the word of truth. What is the word of truth? It’s Scripture isn’t it?

It is from Scripture we read of God's plan of salvation and all the details of it.

The fourth thing about God:

4. God wants us to be His first fruits vs. 18b

Remember that when Scripture describes "first fruits" it means the first and best of a crop or of the animals selected for the offering. So, of all of creation, it is those who have received Jesus as Savior who become the first fruits.

The first fruits, when given, become the property of the one to whom it was given. We as believers are the property of God. We are His!!!

Catch this: Our salvations primary purpose isn't for our benefit, although we certainly do benefit, it's to fulfill God's sovereign purpose of believers becoming the first fruit of His creatures.

James' second test for us to understand where temptation is coming from. Who do we think is tempting us?

Satan, for sure, tempts us just as he tempted Jesus. But just as we recently saw in Revelation when Satan was locked in the pit humanity was still tempted by their own hearts to sin.

We need to face the truth about our own condition and humbly confess that sinfulness to our Father in heaven. Sometimes we may need to confess to others.

Others we may have harmed by our sin.

Scripture also teaches us that we are to confess our sins to one another. This is one way in which we can gain victory over sin. Is there something God is asking you to confess?