

# WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

## Life Application Sunday School Class

### Book of James - Session 5

February 17, 2002

#### I. REVIEW: The Anatomy Of Temptation

##### READ James 1:13-15

*13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

What is temptation?

It is a solicitation to do evil, an alluring to do wrong, to disobey God.

What is the source of temptation?

First, verse 13 clearly states that it is not God. There is nothing in God to tempt, and He does not tempt anyone to sin. He never entices anyone to do evil.

Verse 14 says that temptation arises from within us. It comes from our own desires, cravings, or longings. These desires and longings of our hearts serve as bait to draw us away, to pull us off the path of righteousness. Sin doesn't just happen in a moment, but is a process where desires of the heart rise to the position of rulers in my heart.

When faced with temptation, I have a fundamental decision to make. Am I going to believe and obey God and His Word, or am I going to be ruled by our desires and my feelings. If my desires rule and dictate my actions, they have become my god. They have replaced my allegiance to God, and have become an idol. I have become their slave, and they will begin to rule over me, and I will work to serve them. And make no mistake, when we work for our desires, and serve our selfish dictates, payday is just around the corner. The wages of sin is death.

Genesis 3 verse 1

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

Satan plants seeds of doubt concerning what God has said. Temptation always is an attack on the integrity of what God has said. To overcome temptation, we need to discern where God's word is being undermined or attacked.

Genesis 3 verse 2-5

*2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from*

*the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."* "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

When engaging in temptation, thoughts will come from the tempter that minimize the consequences of sin. To fight temptation, we need to affirm that sin has dreadful consequences, and that God is not mocked. We need to be assured that our sins will find us out. These thoughts will guard us from succumbing to the subtlety of the devil.

Other battles of the mind include thoughts that God is holding out on us, and that He does not have our best interest in mind, that He is depriving us and not letting us have what is good and satisfying for us. In temptation, there is always an attack on the character of God, on His goodness and His wisdom. Trials by their very nature bring these temptations into play.

### Genesis 3 verse 6

*6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

And there is the James 1 process at work. Once we start to listen to the lies, and doubt the integrity and wisdom of God, our desires rise to the surface and take over. Without the protection of faith in God's word in place, we become vulnerable to our sinful desires, and they take control and lead us astray. We need to be aware that our flesh will always side with Satan's lies. That's why we must learn to walk by faith in God's Word, and not by our feelings and desires. We need to allow God's word rather than our desires to rule our lives and dictate our actions.

### Genesis 3:7-8

*7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. <sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

When we choose to disobey God by following our desires instead of what God has said, there are devastating consequences. First, there is shame which results in guilt. In response, we run and hide from God. Sin produces shame, guilt, and fear.

### Genesis 3:9-10

*9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

Here is a picture of God's mercy and grace. As we are filled with shame, guilt, and fear because of our disobedience, and run from God, instead of abandoning us, God pursues us.

### Genesis 3:11-13

*11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" <sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

Even after we are caught and confronted with our sin, as we see shortcomings by reading the Word, as the Spirit convicts us of our failures and weaknesses, as a message from God's Word fingers our problem, our tendency is to not take responsibility, but to shift the blame. When we do shift the blame to another person, or to our circumstances, we in essence are saying God has placed us in a situation that was too great for us

to bear. Who gave Adam the woman? Was it not God? This is why James 1:13 says that when we are tempted, we are not to blame God, or anyone else for that matter.

### Genesis 3:14-19

*14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." 16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." 17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*

And the result of temptation yielded to is judgement and death. There are consequences for yielding to temptation. All pain, sickness, toil, sorrow, hardship, disappointment, despair, broken relationships, and death has root in this original rebellious act. Every one of us is a descendent Adam, and we all carry the fallen, sinful nature of our ancestor.

*Gen 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*

Praise the Lord, the story doesn't end with Adam and Eve's fall. God did not leave them in their shame, but provided a covering for their shame. God has made provision for our guilt and shame in a second Adam, one who did not yield to temptation. He came and was tempted at all points, yet without sin. And just as God shed the blood of innocent animals to cover the nakedness and shame of Adam and Eve, Jesus Christ shed His blood and gave His perfect, sinless life on the cross to provide a covering for our sins. God raised Him from the dead, proclaiming to all that sin and death have been defeated for all of those who have placed their faith and trust solely in Christ and His sacrifice. One day the curse that Adam brought on this world will be fully removed, and the creation will be restored and set free from its bondage. At that time, we will enter into the fullness of our redemption, and all remnants of sin and temptation will be removed from us. But as we press toward that wonderful day, we must battle through this process of temptation.

So before moving on in James, let's review these principles concerning temptation:

- Temptation is a solicitation to do evil, an alluring to disobey God.
- The source of temptation is not God, but rather our own desires.
- Sin is not an instantaneous act, but the culmination of a process.
- This process of temptation starts with questioning God's Word and His integrity.
- It continues as Satan minimizes the consequences of sin.
- Once we begin to listen to these lies, we move from the shelter of God's Word, and we become vulnerable to our desires.
- This downward spiral continues as our unchecked desires rise to the position of ruler.
- These desires become our masters, and lead us off the path of righteousness and into sin.
- After we have obeyed our sinful desires, we suffer consequences; shame, guilt, and death.

Understanding this process helps us overcome temptation. When we see the process at work, we must choose to obey God and His Word, and not our desires. We must let our renewed thinking dictate our actions, not our desires.

Now let's tie this process of temptation back into the broader theme of trials. How are temptations and trials related? Trials are outward circumstances, situations, hardships, difficulties, weaknesses, frailties, etc. They come to us under the direction of our sovereign God who has a purpose in sending them our way. God's primary agenda in trials is to conform us to the image of Christ. When facing trials, we are tempted not to submit to God's agenda, but rather give way to desires that run contrary to God's will. So trials present the opportunity to overcome temptation. As we choose to follow God and not our desires, our faith and character are strengthened. Trials are the school that teach us how to walk by faith (believing God and His Word) and not by sight (according to our senses, which are related to our desires).

This brings us James 1:16-18:

*16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, 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.*

The word "deceived" means to wander off the path, to be seduced. Do these words sound familiar? In times of trial, we are tempted to believe the lie that God has sent us something bad, not good. God's intention in the trial is not to harm us, or lead us into evil, but to strengthen us and produce endurance. Trials are good and perfect gifts sent to us by God for our purification, pruning, and maturity. The word perfect means complete. You've seen the gifts that come with "batteries included". This gift box labeled trial includes the power to bear the trial and escape temptation. This enabling grace that comes with trials is described in I Corinthians 10:13:

*13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*

With each trial comes a way to escape the temptations associated with that trial, so that we can endure it. In light of what we have been learning about temptation, look at verse 14. The way of escape is to flee idolatry! The way to escape temptation is to flee from the rule of our desires. It is in saying no to the flesh, and yes to the Spirit. Paul said it this way in Galatians 5:16-18

*16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

So, looking back at James 1:17, we see that when God sends us a gift, it is good, and it is complete. The trials that He sends include the enabling to endure, if we choose to flee from the rule of our desires and depend on His grace. We are assured that these trials mean us no harm, because they come from God, who doesn't change. He is a steady, shadowless light, completely pure. We understand the nature of the gifts He gives us by looking at the gift of the new birth. God's gifts are given by His choice and intention and according to His good pleasure. He chose to save us and give us new life by revealing His word to our hearts. God has chosen us to be the firstfruits of all of His creation. Remember the passage in Romans 8, that talks about the divine purpose in our redemption? The creation is groaning and waiting to enter into the freedom of the sons of God. When Christ returns, He is going to fully manifest our redemption. Our bodies will be glorified, and all of the remnants of the curse will be removed. We are the firstfruits, the first of creation to be set free from the curse of sin, and all of creation will follow and enter into our liberty. And the good gift of trials are preparing us for that day.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Think about specific temptations identify the following:

- Where God's Word, goodness, love, and integrity are being challenged
- The consequences of yielding to this temptation and where the devil is minimizing those consequences
- The desires that attempt to rule
- The specific scriptures that affirm the truth
- The specific ways of escape that God has provided