

WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Life Application Sunday School Class

Book of James - Session 4

February 10, 2002

REVIEW:

James 1:2-8

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

1. Believers are commanded to rejoice in times of trial.
2. The command to rejoice is not a command to feel, but to consider.
3. We can rejoice in trials as God displays His faithfulness and salvation.
4. In the parable of the soils, the successful plant persevered.
5. Trials are sent by God to produce a persevering faith that will carry us to the end.
 6. Jesus provides the prime example of perseverance as He endured the agony of the cross for the joy set before Him.
7. Genuine faith will be tested, purified and stand strong through the storm.
8. One of the main objectives in a trial is to replace our agenda with God's agenda.
9. We can discern our agenda by what we ask for in prayer.
10. We need to understand God's agenda in trials.
 11. One item on God's agenda is to produce perseverance, that will carry us to the completion of our redemption, also called glorification, also called the manifestation of our sonship.
 12. In time of trial, we need to ask for wisdom in an attitude of trust.
 13. To pray in faith means we pray believing God is in control, He is wise and good and loves us, and that will obey what He shows us.

Look at James 1:8⁸ *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

The person that does not pray in faith is called a double minded man in this verse. One of the following attitudes or actions manifests in time of temptation or trial:

- He doubts God is in control of the situation

- He doubts God is wise (that He knows what He is doing)
- He doubts God is good
 - He doubts God loves him
 - He is not committed to obeying God's will

Trials have the ability to reveal a person's true character. For the true believer, God will use trials to expose and remove the false and strengthen the genuine. For a mere professing believer that really has not been saved, trials will reveal their hypocrisy. Such persons are referred to as double minded. True believers can succumb to double-mindedness (e.g. Peter), and trials will reveal those idols of the heart. The true believer will express godly sorrow which will lead to repentance and cleansing. Many people actually are drawn to the Lord and saved through times of trial. Others, when their double mindedness is exposed by a trial, will become bitter or justify their doubts, and prove that they are not true believers, but deceived. Judas Iscariot is such an example.

Let's take a closer look at some passages that address this concept of double-mindedness.

Look at James 1:8 again. ⁸ *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does*

First, we see that those who do not trust in God, but doubt God, are unstable. One day they are praising God with their mouth and professing to be His follower. The next day they are living in sin, or mad at God, or are not interested in seeking God's will. We might call them fair weather Christians. When everything is smooth sailing, and things are going their way, they come to church, and pray, and profess to know and follow the Lord. But when the wind blows another direction, they are tossed away from the things of God, and go with the ways of the world. According to this passage, this type of individual will not receive anything from the Lord, including eternal life. This individual is what James calls a hearer of the Word, but not a doer, and he is deceived.

A double-minded person has a fundamental problem. He has not trusted fully in the Lord. He has not surrendered his life to the Lordship of Christ. He is trying to add Christ to his life, or serve Christ and still hang onto the world. He wants just enough of Jesus to save him, but no more. He wants that assurance of heaven, but his treasures and desires are in the here and now. Listen to the Word of God concerning this type of individual:

Mt 6:24 ²⁴ *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.*

Mt 12:30 ³⁰ *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.*

Lk 14: ²⁶ *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

According to the very words of Jesus Himself, you can't partially live for God. If your devotion is divided, then you are disloyal to God, and according to Jesus, you hate Him.

Let's look back to the book of James for the diagnosis and cure for double-mindedness:

READ James 4:4-10

James 4: ⁴ *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says*

without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God

opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

What, according to verse 8, is the cause and cure for double-mindedness. The problem with the double minded person is an impure heart. And the cure is to recognize it, confess it, mourn over it, humble ourselves, and draw near to God, who alone can change our heart. The call to cleanse our hands is a call to change our outward actions, which is repentance. The command to purify our hearts is a call to have a change of motive and desire. The only way this is possible is to be poor in spirit, grieving over our sin, and coming to God in humility and lowliness of mind seeking His mercy. And if we come to Him confessing our sin, recognizing our spiritual poverty, broken over our wickedness, the promise is that He will lift us up. For many elect believers, the sovereign God has used the hardness and pain of trials and difficulties to break them and change their hearts for His glory. For our hearts to change, our laughter needs to be turned into mourning and our joy into gloom. How merciful and kind is our Father, who brings all that is necessary to bring us to a place of true repentance and faith in His Son.

READ James 1:9-12

⁹ The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰ But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. ¹² Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

TRIALS, THE GREAT EQUALIZER

This passage contrasts two types of believers.

1. The brother in humble circumstances – KJV brother of low degree; low estate, humble, those that have little to be proud of in this world, those with few possessions or in low position.
2. The brother who is rich – full of possessions, plenteous in goods, wealthy

The poorest and lowliest person in this life that is a true Christian brother has been born again into the family of God. He has been elevated from his low position. He is a joint heir with Christ, and has been given a persevering faith that stands strong in the face of life's difficulty. He can rejoice in that coming eternal reward that will be given to all who endure to the end.

The materially rich and exalted person that is also one of God's elect can rejoice in that God has humbled him and brought him to recognition of his spiritual poverty, and that he has been given the grace to call on the Lord, and that God has poured out His mercy in his life and that he will endure to the end and receive the crown of life. The rich brother should not rejoice in his material belongings, for they are temporary. The beauty of riches is as frail as the petals of a flower that will soon wither under the burning heat of the mid-day sun. The glory associated with earthly riches can so soon be removed through the trials of this life, and certainly have no eternal value. In fact, the scriptures teach earthly riches make it difficult to receive salvation. Riches can be spiritual weeds that choke the word. The poor of this world are often quicker to recognize their need of God. If a rich man has been humiliated by God to the place that he no longer serves money, nor trusts in the uncertainty of riches, he can rejoice that God has shown him the same mercy and grace that has been shown his lowly brother of humble means.

Both the poor brother and the rich brother are blessed together as they persevere under trial and testing. They can rejoice on equal ground because God has placed a love for the Savior in both of their hearts that will carry them to a common eternal inheritance.

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; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

We now enter another aspect of trials. The greek word for temptation in this passage is the same word for trial. During trying, difficult circumstances, we are tempted to leave the path of God's agenda, and go our own way. We now want to take a closer look at this process of temptation, so that we might better be able to resist it and stand strong during times of trial.

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.

So if God is not the author of temptation, where does it come from? Are the words of oldtime TV comedian Flip Wilson true "The devil made me do it"? Verse 14 says that temptation to do evil 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. Our desires speak to us and say "Wouldn't that be good to have thus and so?" The desire to be satisfied, to have what we want, to be happy, to be comfortable, to be free from hardship and pain and unpleasantness, to have it our way, to feel good..... all of these desires can serve as an enticement to do evil, as a bait to draw us into a trap, as a means to get us to step into the snare. When faced with temptation, we 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 my 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 servant, and they will begin to rule over me, and I will begin to work to serve them. And make no mistake, when you go to work for your desires, and you serve your selfish dictates, payday is just around the corner. The wages of sin is death. God is not mocked. Whatever you sow, you will reap.

So to better understand temptation, let's take a closer look at the process. Sin doesn't just happen in a moment, a twinkling of the eye. There is a process. It starts with a desire of the heart rising to the position of dictator. Some examples: When the desire for food takes over and demands that you consume more than what you need. When that same desire demands that you have what tastes good, regardless of the effect on your physical health. When the sexual desire starts to lure you away from your spouse, and causes your eyes to wander where they shouldn't go. When that same desire takes the throne, it pushes you to flirt, and to become too close to one who is not your covenant partner. When that desire for recognition moves to the front, and it produces pride, and leads you into actions where you promote yourself and become offended when others don't recognize your contribution. When the fear of other people starts to take control, and it keeps you from being honest and transparent with others for fear that they may reject you. When the desire for money gets into the driver's seat, and takes you down many evil roads like cheating, stealing, or

gambling.

Let's go to Genesis 3, and walk through the temptation process:

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 a seed of doubt concerning what God has said. Temptation always is an attack on the integrity of what God has said. When learning to overcome temptation, we need to identify where God's word is being undermined or attacked.

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ 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.'" ⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Thoughts coming from the tempter always minimize the consequences of sin. When combating temptation, we need to affirm that sin has dreadful consequences, and that God is not mocked. We need to be sure that our sins will find us out. These thoughts will guard us from succumbing to the subtlety of the devil.

Other thoughts that we must battle (note that the battle is in the realm of the mind) are 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 this temptation into play.

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. 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.

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 at that point they 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 to rule our lives and dictate our actions. Right thinking will lead to right action, which will lead to right feeling.

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

When we choose to sin by following our desires instead of what God has said, there are devastating consequences. We run and hide from God because of the guilt. Sin produces guilt, fear, and shame. But God in His great mercy and love pursues us as we run away.

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?" ¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³ 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 ourselves in the Word, as the Spirit convicts us of our shortcomings, as a message or teaching from God's Word fingers our problem, our tendency is to not take responsibility, but to shift the blame.

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 we see here in the rest of this passage that indeed the wages of sin is death. There are consequences for yielding to temptation. Praise the Lord, this is not the end of the story. God provided 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 as a ransom payment for our sins on the cross. God then raised Him from the dead, proclaiming to all that sin and death have been defeated for all of those who will put 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. We will enter into the fullness of our redemption, and all remnants of sin and temptation will be removed from us.

But until that day, we must fight the good fight, and prepare ourselves for this battle with our desires and the tempter that uses them to try to pull us off the righteous road.

To summarize the anatomy of 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 rather a process.

The process of temptation and sin starts with questioning God's Word and His integrity.

Satan always minimizes the consequences of sin.

Once we begin to listen to the lies, we lose the protection of God's Word, and we become vulnerable to our desires.

The process of temptation continues as a desire starts to rise to the position of dictator.

These unchecked desires become our master, our god, our idol.

Those desires work like bait to lure us off the path of righteousness.

As we obey our desires, they lead us into sin.

When we work for our desires, we collect a paycheck – death.

The Bottom Line:

We must choose to be ruled by God and His Word, and not our desires.