

## Daily Bible Study

### *“Putting The Blame On God”*

*James 1:13-17*

*March 12– March 18, 2023*

**THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY** –As we continue our study of James, we take as our text, **James 1:13-17**: *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”* Behind our text for this week lies an aged-old question concerning the origination of evil and the source of temptation. James contributes one of the most penetrating discussions of the nature of temptation in all of Sacred Scripture. But in James’ day as well as our own present day there are still lingering questions for many. Where does temptation come from? Is it from God and therefore His goodness is somehow compromised? James’s readers were living in tough times. They were Jewish Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. Persecution brought many problems for these early Christians one of which was a temptation to sin. First there was the temptation to sin by retaliation. Some of these Christians may have lived by the “I don’t get mad, I get even” principle and figured because they hurt me; therefore I will hurt them back. Temptation from persecution shows up another way as well, namely, by using the persecution as a justification for sin. Reasoning that because my life is so difficult, I am entitled to do whatever I can to make it more pleasurable. People have often allowed their difficulties to give them an excuse for sinning and also for actually blaming God for their sin. They have a skewed view that says God has sent this trial which has caused me to be tempted, so therefore, God has tempted me to sin. We’ve been trying to find someone to blame for our sin since Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent but actually they were both blaming God. In our text we will see James moves from trials to temptations and explains that God does not tempt anyone to sin but rather it is a problem within us as sinners. God is shown to be the good Father He is being cleared of any wrongdoing while the actual true culprit is indicted.

*Suggestion for Prayer: God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. May I understand that temptation to sin comes from within me the sinner and that You are not to be blamed for my sin.*

**TUESDAY** – **James 1:13**: *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”* The context implies that someone is saying that he is tempted by God and is attempting to make his sin God’s fault.

The word translated here *tempted* is the Greek word (*peirasmois*) and it depends on the context whether or not it has a negative or positive connotation. It is also translated as *trials* in **verse 2** in the sense of outward *trials*, but here the verb form is used and it is speaking of *temptation*. James is speaking to an entirely different scenario here as the idea is dealing with a solicitation to evil. It is a present active participle and could accurately be read “being tempted” and it often has the connotation of “a testing with a view toward destruction.” As I mentioned in earlier lessons it has the opposite connotation of the word “test” (*dokimazō*) used in **1:3, 12** which speaks about a testing with a view to an approval or acceptance as genuine, worthwhile valuable and good. James commands his readers that no-one must say *I am tempted by God*. As Alec J. Motyer so beautifully says in His commentary on this passage, “It is a short step from saying that God uses our circumstances to saying that he ordains them—a step that the Bible would, in any event, encourage us to take, for this is its view of the power of God, and of the nature of our life and experiences in this world. But there is an additional and impermissible step. Suppose in any given experience of trial I give up trying, I listen to the tempting voice and come a spiritual cropper, is it not then all his fault? Did he not put me there? Was it not by his will that I found myself cornered by temptation which proved too strong?” James quickly puts that notion to rest as he continues with *God cannot be tempted with evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone*. God is so purely holy and without even a hint of evil that it is impossible for him, as the Greek grammar in this text indicates, to directly or indirectly be responsible for our temptation to evil. We see however that James has a clear understanding of the wicked condition of fallen man who ALWAYS looks for someone to blame for his rebellion and sin. “The devil made me do it” has been a line used and even laughed at for years but it has its roots in The Garden of Eden. In **Genesis 3:12-13** we find Adam blames Eve and she in turn blames the serpent for their sin. There is no tolerance from James of that victim mentality that now is rampant in our society. The poor man blames his poverty for turning him into a thief and the drunk blames his business or domestic pressures for driving him to drink and therefore to the drunk driving which then injures or kills someone. And finally, everyone puts the ultimate blame on God. The problem and source is not the devil or God but as we will see tomorrow, it is YOU and I.

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, forgive me for having such a twisted view of my wretchedness that I often blame someone or something else including You, for my sin and temptation. I thank You for being so Holy and pure that You alone are without evil and sin.”*

**WEDNESDAY** – **James 1:14**: *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”* Before we jump into the particulars of this verse I need to stop and mention another that is currently screaming to me in my head. It is **1 Corinthians 10:13**. It says, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*. God is not tempting you to sin

but rather as Paul states, is “*faithful*” and *will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able* but instead gives us in our temptations a *way of escape*. The truth is actually very opposite of what some were saying in **James 1:13**, *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”*. D. Edmond Hiebert writes, “God is unsusceptible to evil; evil has never had any appeal for Him. It is repugnant and abhorrent to Him.” Moving along, we come to a verse now that details the real cause and issue of our temptation to sin and evil, the very nature of fallen man. James tells us that the blame lies, in fact, in ourselves. The tempting voice is the voice of our own sinful nature. The two verbs translated *drawn away* and *enticed* were used of trapping and luring animals. The luring away to evil is coming from within us. As we saw yesterday, we tend to blame others for our sin. We may blame God, the devil, parents, society, education, etc. but in fact, we are our own worst enemy. The Scripture’s speak of three enemies of humanity: *the world, the flesh, and the devil* and here “*the flesh*,” or our nature given to us from our first father Adam is the culprit. Notice that James doesn’t even mention Satan in this section. Neither is he mentioned in Paul’s discourse on human sin and depravity in **Romans 1-3**. Make no mistake Satan is a real tempter, but he cannot force humans to sin and is, therefore, no excuse for their moral failures. We instead are to blame. Note that James speaks of one’s *own desire*. It’s your desire beloved and mine that lead us into temptation, and if we are not controlled by the Holy Spirit they lead us into sin. As Jeremiah reminded us, (**Jeremiah 17:9**), “*The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked...*” Jesus repeats the same thought when he describes the human heart in **Matthew 15:17-20**. J.B. Phillips paraphrases it as follows: “*Don’t you see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and then out of the body altogether? But the things that come out of a man’s mouth come from his heart and mind, and it is they that really make a man unclean. For it is from a man’s mind that evil thoughts arise—murder, adultery, lust, theft, perjury and blasphemy. These are the things which make a man unclean, not eating without washing his hands properly!*”

Suggestion for Prayer: *Dear God, I really don’t even know how depraved my heart is. Without You and Your Holy Spirit I would be hopeless. Thank You for patiently loving me as a husband to an unfaithful bride. Help me walk in The Spirit so I wouldn’t fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

**THURSDAY – James 1:15:** “*Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*” We now find that James will in practical terms discuss how *desire* or as it is also translated, “*lust*” works. We saw that it lies within fallen man and now we get a glimpse of how it operates. James gives another illustration as this time he takes the example of a Mother or living creature from the time of conception through birth and maturity to death. It is necessary to note that the Greek word translated here *desire* is the word *epithumia* (desire, lust, craving) which is itself morally and spiritually neutral. It is determined to be defined as right or wrong partly by the object desired as well as the for the purpose or reason it is being desired. There are completely pure and wholesome cravings or desires that we may have intense longings for. God created desires within us that are not sinful? They have

been given to us to help us live a balanced life. Let’s use food as an example. We have the desire to eat and to drink so that we may take care of our bodies. When we properly control our desires we live normal lives, but when we throw caution to the wind and discard checks and balances, our desire gets out of hand, we become gluttonous and unhealthy and as James is now explaining that craving or lust has now become pregnant with sin. We see this image of childbirth and Kent Hughes expands this picture as follows: “There are two births here. First, evil desire gives birth to sin. And second, sin gives birth to death ... The idea is that sin grows rapidly, just as an embryo grows to maturity, and when it is full-grown, the state of pregnancy must end. But the horror here is, sin does not give birth to life, as would normally be expected, but to death.” We’ve seen two pictures these past verses. One, our *desires* luring us or drawing us away like an animal or fish being presented bait and like when the fish bites it is hooked and pulled to shore, where it dies. And number two, of our desire (lust) going through childbirth; but that birth resulting in death. The point is unmistakable; Sin is not the light, casual thing it is made out to be, it always leads to death. Gordon Keddie is correct when he says, “You can only be a fun-loving sinner for so long. Soon the bill has to be paid.” And the final instalment to which sin leads is eternal death, which means nothing less than separation from God, and all that is good, forever. God’s eternal wrath is not a pleasant topic but Scripture is unrelenting in its declaration of this reality and Jesus himself was the most vocal proclaimer of it. A person can respond by ignoring and pretending that Divine judgment for sin is not true or we can accept the teaching of Scripture and embrace the way of escape (repentance/faith) it presents.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Dear God, keep me ever aware of the danger of sin and its horrible final consequences and help me look to You with repentance and in faith to Jesus’ cross.*

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY – James 1:16-17:** “*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*” What a positive reminder from James in closing. There is something that breaks the power of sin, delivers us from spiritual and eternal death and it is nothing more than the power and goodness of God working in the human mind and heart giving spiritual life. James fully understands his *beloved brethren* and counsels them with *do not be deceived*. He wants them to consider the character of God and that He gives adversities so that we may come fully rely on Him. God is goodness personified and all *good and perfect* things come *down from Him the Father*. James encourages us to look up to the sky where we see the brilliant light of the sun by day, the reflective light of the moon by night, and the twinkling stars. God is the creator of these and illustrated is God’s absolute stability. With Him *there is no variation or shadow of turning*. God does not change like shifting shadows. Nature is subject to variation and change but not God. He is true light, the Father of these heavenly lights, and is always and constantly working with the interest of His children in mind.

Suggestion for Prayer: *God, help me to know You’re always working all things for my good.*