***James 1:13-17***

***The Source of Temptation and How Gods People May Guard Against It***

Please open your Bibles to the Epistle of James. Today we will be discussing chapter 1 verses 13-17. The topic of our discussion today will be temptation. I want to start off by letting you know that I will be using the words temptations and trials interchangeably. James will be instructing us on the source of temptation as well as how we can resist such temptations through the power of the Holy Spirit. So far in our study of this epistle James has been talking mainly about trials, how the believer in Christ should look at those trials and how, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer in Christ can overcome those trials. Before we look at our verses today let us quickly recap what we have learned so far in this Epistle. James is writing to fellow Jews who are dispersed all throughout the world at that time. He is encouraging them to stay devoted to Christ even though they have been facing trials in their lives. He wants them to face those trials with joy knowing that it is through those trials that they will develop perseverance which leads to fulfilled life of faith in Christ. He also wants them to seek wisdom from God so that when they face those trials they will do so with the proper perspective. Finally, he reminds his readers that they will be rewarded in eternity for keeping their faith after going through such trials. This then leads us to today where we will learn where temptation come from and how we can overcome them through the power of God.

1:13 “**No one is to 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.”**

As we begin to discuss temptation today we are told by James that God is not the source of temptation, nor does He ever tempt anyone to do evil. This fact is of the utmost importance because one of the issues that many people suffer with today is addiction or other issues in their lives that they like to attribute to being caused by God. Also, have you ever heard someone say after they have done something wrong that the devil made me do it? That is also not true. We need to understand why God is not the originator of evil nor is He the cause of the temptations or trials that we face in this life. We have discussed this before, but the origin of evil in this world is because of man. God created a world that in His own words “was very good.” We read these words in Genesis 1 verses 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31. What this means is that everything God had created was good from the very beginning. If everything was good this means that it all was perfect and the way that He wanted things to be. We know that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating from the tree of knowledge. When they chose to do this, they were not tempted by God to do it, nor were they forced by Him to do it. They freely chose to disobey God and therefore also chose to experience the results of that decision, which was physical death.

Now, why can God not be the source of temptation? What we learn in Scripture is that God is pure and holy. There is no imperfection in Him nor is there anything other than good in His nature. A pure and holy God cannot sin which also means that He cannot lead anything that He has created to sin. To do such a thing would make God act in a way that is contradictory to His character. Another example of a situation in which a trial took place in someone’s life that was not the cause of God is the account of Job. When reading the book of Job, we are introduced to a man who was righteous in the eyes of God who faces a long list of trials in his life because God allowed Satan to take away things from him. Even though God allowed Satan to act we read that God knew the result of the situation before it ever began. God knew that Job would not lose his faith, so no matter what happened in Jobs life he would maintain his righteousness. Even though Job initially blames God for his troubles he eventually apologizes and accepts the reality that everything good comes from God. God rewards Job for his faith, but at no time in the account do we see God inflict any pain or trial on Job. We learn that God is not the cause of trials in this life. Trials come and temptations befall all people because they are the children of Adam and Eve who rebelled against Him.   
 Application #1: We need to remember that God is not the author of temptation. The evil that exists in the world today is the result of man rebelling against God. We cannot and should not try to blame God for the results of the sins that we commit in our lives. Rather we first need to acknowledge those sins and admit that we are sinners in need of being saved. This acknowledgement results in repentance, which means that once we realize we have sinned we take a new direction in life. When Jesus began His earthly ministry He began preaching to everyone **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).** When someone becomes a believer in Jesus Christ this results first in repentance. A change of heart allows the person to look at their life as it is in Christ, not just from their own selfish desires. The Apostle Paul preached that God now commands all men to repent since He has sent His Son to earth and has fully made Himself known to His creation (Acts 17:30).

**1:14 “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”**

James now continues discussion by telling his readers where the source of temptation comes from. Since God is not the cause of temptation, then where do the temptations we face come from? Temptation comes from the lust that exists within the heart of every person. Looking closely at verse 14 James says that there are two primary sources of temptation. The first cause is being carried away and the second is being enticed. How does this happen? We are carried away from what is good when we are lured or enticed or lust after the worldly thing that looks attractive. What does it mean to lust? In this context lusting means that all people have deep and strong desire for things in this world. All of us can desire things that are either good or bad. Wanting companionship or the love of others is not something bad to desire. However, seeking this love outside the way that God has designed relationships to be is to have a sinful desire. James has reminded us that the tendency to sin is totally the fault of the person who is enticed. People freely choose to sin when they do not know the will of God or know what is good. If someone does not know God then they will naturally sin because they do not know any other way to act.

Does this mean that if someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ they will never sin again? Unfortunately, the answer to this question is no. Even after someone becomes a believer in Christ they will still sin. What changes is the attitude regarding that sin and the way that the person reacts when they sin. Someone who has experienced a conversion to life as a believer in Christ the way that person looks at sin will forever be changed as well. No longer will that person continue to sin without thinking of it, when they sin they will acknowledge that sin, repent of it and ask God to forgive that sin through the power of the blood of Christ.

Application #2: Even though we have a fallen nature and are enticed to sin because of it, God makes us a new creation when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior. **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *this person is* a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).** The Apostle Paul is informing his readers at the church in Corinth that when they come to faith in Christ He will change them. This is the promise of the gospel. When we are born we inherit the sin that plagues humanity due to the rebellion in the garden, but the good news is that Jesus Christ coming to earth and dying for the sins of humanity has broken that curse allowing us to be made a new creation through Him. This good news should not only impact the way we handle sin in our lives, but it should also impact the way that we treat others who have not yet come to that faith. Rather than being upset non-Christians who do not follow the standards of Biblical teaching, we need to patiently show them through our lives and through our love for them that God has a better way of living He has shared with us in His Word. Jesus says that when we live out our faith in Him that others will see the good works we do, and they will then give glory to God in heaven because of those works (Matthew 5:16). Also, they will know we are Christians by our love. Let us challenge each other to show our love for each other and our fellow man knowing that doing so reflects positively on the God who has created all to be His image bearers.

**1:15 “Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death.”**

The sin that all people commit leads to one conclusion, which is death. The lust or deep desire for things that begins in the heart leads to sin and then when the sin that has birthed by that lust comes to full maturity that leads to the death of the person. I understand that there are many things happening in this world that may make us feel hopeless and afraid. Watching the news can also make us feel as if there is no hope for such a world lost in sin. Every day in my work as a teacher I have interactions with students who come from homes where the gospel is not known and where the love of Christ is not shown. When they come into my classroom, and I hear about the things happening in their homes I sometimes get very discouraged. What I must keep reminding myself is that these young people are only acting the way they do because they do not know any other way of behaving other than what they experience in their homes. Treating a non-believer in Christ the same way as we treat a fellow believer is not fair because without Christ they are just acting in the only way they know. What I am called to do is be the love of Christ to that child and show them that there is a better way to live. If you and I do not use the opportunities we have to share the gospel with them then we really are showing them that we do not love them.

The only way to help fallen humanity recognize sin is to teach the gospel whenever we have the chance. To do so is not easy and will many times cause us to be labeled as intolerant or hateful people. We need to teach that all people are sinners in need of a Savior. If we can help people understand that they are lost in their sins and that they have a Savior who has paid the price for that sin then they can begin the process of first recognizing that they have a problem.

The Apostle Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).** We are called to remind ourselves as well as others that sin leads to death, but choosing to live as a follower of Christ will result in eternal life. What we also need to point out to others is that following Christ is not just doing good deeds or following a particular list of rules. Obeying the commands of God in His word are like a child following the rules of a loving parent. God is our Father meaning that He loves us as a Father loves his child. When we follow His rules for life we are choosing to live in a way that is better for us. God knows what is better for us then we do, so obeying His commands is good for us. Jesus sums all of this up in His Sermon on the Mount **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? So if you, *despite* being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:7-11).** Even we who are filled with evil know how to give our children good things. If we know that much, how much more does our pure and holy God know to give good things when His children ask for them. We need to ask God for the wisdom to know His will by studying Scripture, praying for guidance, and seeking help from our brothers and sisters in the faith. If we do these things we can protect ourselves from the lust that exists in our hearts.

Application #3: Every person is tempted, but each of us are enticed by things that impact us differently than others. Some people have problems with sexual sin, alcohol, greed, or pride. No matter what issue it may be that haunts us we have deliverance through the good news of the gospel that God can deliver us from that sin. There is no sin that is too great that God cannot deliver us from. For that to happen we need to totally rely on God. In 2 Peter 1:4 we read **“for His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4Through these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world on account of lust.”** **“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).**

**1:16-17 “Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”**

In our concluding verses today, James encourages his readers by telling them that the God we worship is great and more powerful than the sin we face. The good news of the gospel message is that even though man chose to rebel against God in the beginning we have a God who is good and has provided us with all the good gifts of life. By being the Father of lights God has shown that in Him there is no shadow or imperfection of any kind. Our God is the Father of all that is good, whereas fallen man is the cause of all that is evil in the world. To illustrate this point the Apostle Paul wrote these words **“For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I do the very thing I do not want, I am no longer *the one* doing it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner person, but I see a different law in the parts of my body waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, *the law* which is in my body’s parts. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:18-25).** Even though our physical bodies are dying daily to sin our minds are constantly being renewed by the words of God. Paul reminds us that the only way we can be delivered from the death that sin brings us is to trust Jesus Christ as our Savior, to acknowledge our need for a savior and to rely on His saving work on the cross which makes us right with God. To do this, we must admit that we sinners needing saved. We cannot save our physical bodies, but God gives us the gift of spiritual eternal life through the sacrificial love of His Son.

Application #4: Guarding our hearts and minds from the lust that exists in us is a constant struggle as we navigate through this life. Paul instructs the church in Rome how they can do this with these words **“Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2).** How can we renew our minds as Paul instructs? We can do this by continually seeking the wisdom of God and filling our minds with His word. We need to read His word daily taking in the words of eternal life as found in Scripture. We also need to continue to come to His house and worship whenever the opportunity arises. Being a part of a strong Bible believing church is essential to that aim. We also must commune with God daily in prayer knowing that He listens when we pray to Him. Our prayers do not need to be fancy; they just need to be from our hearts sharing with God everything that is in our thoughts. Even though God already knows our needs He wants us to share our concerns with Him because He cares deeply for us. Finally, another way to grow in faith is to share your faith with others. When you see someone come to faith because of a seed you helped to plant I can tell you that will cause a joy in you that will never fade away.

In conclusion, we have discovered today that temptations we face in this life are not the result of God but happen because of the rebellion of mankind. Even though we have rebelled our loving Father God has given us the gift of His Son, His Scriptures, and His Holy Spirit to guide us in the way that will lead us to eternal life. Even though our physical bodies are dying because of sin we are being renewed every day though the power of God. No matter how much time we have on this earth we are given a very important job. We need to proclaim the good news of the gospel both in what we say as well as in what we do. The world around us may be dying because of sin, but the good news is that God is greater than any of that sin. We have an eternal home in heaven to look forward to so let us not be discouraged by what we see around us. Keep the faith knowing that our God has overcome this world. In Him we have the victory!