

**James 1:12-18**  
***“Triumphing over temptation.”***

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**I. Introduction**

James has been exhorting his readers to “endure” trials in order to mature; these **“trials” are tests from the outside to indicate to us what is truly on our inside!** They are allowed by God and are for our benefit, designed that we may “pass” the test. In the passage before us James introduces to his readers to another “test” that will also reveal to us where we truly at, “temptations”. They are NOT from God and they test us from the inside and we can see what is going on in our hearts. The connection between “trials” and “temptations” is that if we don’t ask God for continual wisdom by faith our “trials” from the “outside” can become “temptations” on the “inside”. Such trials without understanding that they are producing our spiritual maturity can cause us to question God’s love and purpose in our lives and satan will use this to cause us to try to escape in the flesh. Further more both trials from the outside and temptations from the inside require us to exercise endurance: **“Trials” to stay where we are** and **“temptations” to “stay away from”**. God doesn’t want His children to yield to temptation but neither does He shield us from temptation because if we are going to mature, we must learn to face temptation and overcome them! There are three things James wanted his readers to understand about our relationship with temptations:

1. Vs. 13-16 **The author of temptation**
2. Vs. 17 **The attack of temptation**
3. Vs. 18 **The appeal of temptation**

## II. Vs. 12-16 The Author of temptation

Vs. 12 Here we have the first indication that James was familiar with Jesus' words as he uses the same "Blessed is the man" that Jesus employ in His sermon on the Mount. The blessing is also similar in that it is a paradox where blessing is being prescribed upon the person who endures under trials. James ties together his statement on trials and having the right view on wealth staying under temptation. Both trials from without and temptation need endurance just from opposite ends; as trials need endurance to stay under and temptations need endurance to stay away from! He speaks of the "crown of life" which the Lord promised to those that love Him, which visible by enduring under trials and temptations in order to mature. Those who "ask" for wisdom from the Lord will be the ones who practice endurance under the trial and here we see when facing temptation as well. We learn from James that it is possible that what started out as a trial to test us can become a temptation to distract us if we don't deal with our hearts. The start of this is when we assign wrong motives to God and begin to think that we can avoid the circumstances by taking the devils bait. Evil cannot tempt God and therefore He is never the author of it

Vs. 13-16 **The author of temptation**: James starts this truth about "**temptation**" from a negative saying, "*Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God.*" Paul said this in 2 Corinthians 10:5 saying that the believer needs to "*cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" The first that James wants his readers to understand with regards to the temptation they are facing is "**DON'T BLAME GOD**"! There are two truths about God that make it impossible for Him to be the author of temptation:

### A. **God is too Holy to be tempted**

## **B. God is too Loving to tempt others**

If Christians would FIRST start with those two facts about God and take the wrong thoughts about God captive to the obedience of Christ, the devil's temptations would make no progress.

Satan offers the believer a way of surviving the trial by cheating. A way of accomplishing something the wrong way. You don't actually pass a test if you do so by cheating! Further more

James reveals four stages about temptations in verses 14-15 as he writes "**But each one is tempted when**":

1. Vs. 14a "**Drawn away**": James uses the phrase "*drawn away by his own desires*" and some translations use the word "lusts" instead of the word "desires" but the word in the Greek isn't specifically referring to sexual passion but all kinds of desires. Here we learn something very valuable with regards to "desire" as they are given to us by God and in and of themselves are not sinful. Without God given desire we would not be healthy humans. Unless we a desire for food and water and thus hunger and thirst we would never eat and drink and would eventually die. Without the desire for rest we wouldn't sleep and without the God given desire for sex the human race wouldn't continue. The "desire" is NOT the problem it is when we seek to "satisfy" these God given desires outside the will of God is when we get into trouble. Eating is normal, gluttony is sin. Sleep is normal, laziness is sin, Sex in a marriage between a man and a woman is normal but outside that is sin. It is not healthy for humans to "deny" these desires for a period of time unless God has direct a "fast" for a designated period of time. However, these God given desires must be our servants NOT our masters, which they will be when we yield to Jesus.
2. Vs. 14b "**Enticed**": The second thing James reveals to his readers is that "**no temptation appears as a temptation**". James uses two words that come from the world of an outdoorsman as he writes from the perspective hunting and fishing to get his point across. First is the phrase "**drawn away by his own desires**" and this carries the idea of "**baiting a trap**" and "**enticed**" carries the idea of "**baiting a hook**". Both the hunter and the fisherman use bait to catch their prey, the use the animal or fish's "natural desires" to attract and catch them. The idea is that you have to "**hide the trap**" in order to "**hook**" the prey! Temptation **ALWAYS** carries with it the idea of some kind of bait that appeals to our natural desires! The "BAIT" has to have two purposes if it is going to work by satan:
  - a. **It has to attract us**: If the bait doesn't excite us by appealing towards our natural appetite and desires than we will never be tempted by it. Lot would have never been tempted towards Sodom if he hadn't first saw the "*well-watered plains of Jordan*". This gives great insight if as soon as we are "**excited**" by the bait we will **STOP** and realize that there is a hook waiting to capture us!
  - b. **It has to hide the hook**: Not only does the "BAIT" have to "excite" us it also has to conceal the "hook", as it has to cause us to NOT THINK about the consequences of taking the bait, namely "sin and death"! That gives another clue of how alluring the

bait has to be and also understanding that we are being tempted if we are not stopping to consider the the consequences! King David would have never considered adultery with Bathsheba if while watching her bathe he would have stopped to consider the consequences of his action being the death of their child, the murder of a trusted soldier and the ruin of his family! It is interesting to contrast that with Jesus' temptation by satan where three times Jesus responded to the temptation with "It is written" as His response to the temptation was based upon the word of God not the bait that hid the hook. Upon further examining that exchange we see that there was nothing wrong with the desire for bread to satisfy hunger but it was going against God's will, outside of His plan that was the problem. The key is "Using the Word of God to detect the bait of the devil".

3. Vs. 15a "Conceived": A careful examination reveals the progression of our entrapment to the temptation as well, as our souls are made up of our emotions, intellect and will and the temptation progress through those three aspects of our being by first appealing to or emotions, then our reasoning intellect to finally our willing action. James switches metaphors from the world of an outdoorsman to that of the birth as he says "*Then when desire has **CONCEIVED** it gives birth to sin.*" What we immediately notice from James is that "**DESIRE**" conceives a method by way of the intellect which we can take the bait that hides the hook and the WILL approves and acts upon this which results in SIN. The reality is that we can stop this as soon as it hits our "Feelings or emotions" by taking that thought captive to the "obedience in Christ". We are to act or obey because it is right not because we feel like it! The more we act in obedience to Jesus the more we will say no to temptation.
4. Vs. 15b "Death": *Disobedience gives birth to death, not life. Yes, we may have the bait that toyed with our emotions and convinced our intellect but the very bait that attracted us is what has captured us!* These four stages of temptation are clearly seen in Adam and Eve She saw the bait and forgot the warning from God and died spiritually and finally physically. If we can get our eyes off of the bait and onto the consequences as Romans reminds us that the wages of sin us death.

### III. Vs. 17 The Attack of temptation

Vs. 17 The second thing that James wanted his readers to know was The attack of temptation, or what temptation was ultimately aiming at. James tells us right here, "*Every good and perfect gift is from above, and it comes down from the Father of lights..*" The aim of every temptation is always the same: It is always aimed at God's love and care for His children. We learn immediately that we have an amazing impenetrable force field of protection that protects us

against any and all temptation, the “GOODNESS OF GOD”! Not only as Paul wrote in Romans 2:4 “*that the goodness of God leads you to repentance*” it is also God’s goodness that protects us from yielding to temptation. **Satan knows that if we begin doubting God’s goodness we will soon be attracted to the devils offers!** So here in verse 17 James presented four facts about God’s goodness:

1. **Every good gift....every perfect gift...comes down from the Father:** Everything good in this world comes from God and if it doesn’t come from God then it is NOT good. Even if we don’t immediately see its goodness we will one day see that it was good. Paul was “given a thorn in his flesh” this gift from God was to buffet him and in time he came to realize that through this gift he appreciated more that God’s grace was sufficient, that God’s strength was perfected in his weakness so that he took pleasure in his infirmity.
2. **“Every perfect gift”:** This phrase translates “every act of giving” and speaks to the fact that with God not only is every good gift from God the way in which He gave it is always perfect! In other words, “**What God gives and the way in which He gives it is always good!**” In the world a good gift can be devalued by the way in which it is given as may not have been given in love with the best of intentions, not so with God. When God gives He does so in a loving and gracious manor.
3. **“Comes down”:** Here the idea in the Greek is that God is constantly and consistently giving as the phrase means “keeps on coming”! Even when we don’t recognize His gifts they are still coming down upon us as He floods us with His goodness!
4. **“With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning”:** Finally, James reminds his readers that it is impossible for God to change His mind concerning his giving towards us. He cannot change because He is holly and he cannot change because He is perfect in all His ways. **God’s gifts are always better than satan’s bargains!** Satan never offers us anything that we won’t end up paying for dearly.

So the next time we are tempted we need to remember God’s goodness and if you are being tempted don’t take the bait an it will only hook you and destroy you!

#### IV. Vs. 18 **The appeal of temptation**

Vs. 18 The third and final thing James wanted his readers to know was **The appeal of temptation!** This has to do with the believe realizing their new identity and sufficient because of their New Birth! James writes, “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*” James has told us that God is not the author of temptation, he has told us that the attack of temptation is against the goodness of God and now

finally he reminds his readers that we are not as we once were “slaves to sin” we have been given a new Christ Like nature. James again draws from the realm of “birth” but this time it is “new birth” that is his focus. In this verse James reveals four facts about our New Birth in Jesus:

1. “*Of His own will*”: This was Nicodemus’ question “how could he enter his mother womb a second time”? Jesus’ answer was this New Birth is a spiritual birth when we place our faith in Jesus. We do not generate this New Birth God does through the Holy Spirit, therefore it cannot be removed by us and is available too us.
2. “*He brought us forth*”: This reminds us that we did not earn this new birth nor did we deserve it; God gave it to us when we trusted in the finish work of His Son, Jesus. The apostle John told his 1:13 three truths about being born again:
  - A. “*Not of blood*”: **It’s not a birthright!** That means, not by inheritance, not by human ancestry. You cannot get into the kingdom of God, or be born into the family of God, by being raised in a Christian home.
  - B. “*Nor of the will of the flesh*”: **Not by religious practice!** Here the idea is that we or not saved be simply going to church reading our bible, all of which is good. Sometimes you will ask someone if they are saved and they will immediately tell you which Church they attend, but salvation is not just by attending Church. What makes someone a Christian is not the externals it’s “*not of the will of the flesh*”.
  - C. “*Nor of the will of man*”: **Not by self effort!** Our good works or effort can not cause regeneration of a life. There has been nothing more damning placed upon mankind then the thought that our “*goodness*” saves us. The truth is if our personal goodness can save us then the “Word” becoming flesh and dwelling among us, taking on the likeness of fallen man and paying the price for our sin was a terrible injustice to Jesus. No religious official can declare you a Christian, no certificate or membership affiliation can affirm it.
3. “*By the word of truth*”: It is by God’s Word through His Spirit. Because of this miraculous “Re-birth” we can be confident of who we now are in Christ as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”
4. “*That we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*”: The word “firstfruits” is a Jewish phrase as they were called to give the “firstfruits” as an expression of their obedience and devotion. **But the phrase here is being used NOT of what we are giving to God but instead of what He has given to us!** What this reveals to us is that God has given us and declared us to be His very best. Hebrews 2:6-8 speaks of this saying that “*What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*” *For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.*” John reminds his readers in 1 John 3:2 “**Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**” Saints, New Birth enables us to overcome temptation!