

Part Two: Enticed to Death

Written by Bob Stone

It is difficult to say no to temptation, but long-term effects follow if we yield to a lot of little temptations. When we are tempted to sin, we don't always see the short- and long-term consequences. We slowly but surely spend the good resources in our life on things that will ultimately leave us depleted emotionally, physically and spiritually. Some of you today may have even totally spent your resources and all you have left are some worthless items.

In James, chapter one, we will learn about the temptation process and what it will take to resist its allurements. In our [last lesson, we learned in James 1:2-12](#) that we are taken through trials and hardships so that our faith can be "stretched into maturity."

But notice how the subject changes:

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."

This is a sudden change of direction. In verses 2-12, James addresses the outward trials and tests—all the troubles and afflictions we face in the circumstances of our lives. In verses 13-18, however, our focus is on the inward temptations to do wrong. It is interesting to note, however, that the word "tempt" in verse 13 is derived from the same Greek root as "trial" in verse 12."

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Is there a difference? Yes!

A **trial** is an experience *God* brings into our lives in order to help us *grow* into maturity.

A **temptation** is a process *Satan* brings into our lives in order to cause us to *sin*.

The important thing to note is that any circumstance can be a trial or a temptation, depending upon our response. All trials can have an element of temptation in them if we refuse to persevere in the test, or we ask for wisdom with a double mind. All temptations, on the other hand, can have an element of trial in them in that they must be resisted and we must persevere if we are going to grow into maturity.

Having pointed that out, it is important to clearly distinguish between a trial and a test. James sees them as related, and sometimes overlapping, but also different. With that in mind, let's look specifically at James 1:13-18. Here James gives a great deal of insight on the subject of temptation.

The Perpetual Nature of Temptation—v. 13a.

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It's not *if* but *when*—v. 13a. We will have to face temptation our whole life. We will never arrive at the place in our Christian lives when are no longer tempted to sin. If our Lord was tempted, we will be tempted. If we think we've arrived at a spiritual plane where we are above temptation, we have just given way to the temptation to pride and we will soon fall.

Temptation will be unending and come from various sources—v. 13a.

- They may be material, the desire to acquire things no matter what the cost, or who gets hurt.
- They may be abstract—e.g., the desire for fame, power, title, or revenge, no matter what it costs or how it is achieved.
- They may be sensual—e.g., the desire to enjoy the pleasure of another body even though the pleasure is immoral.

They will come in all sizes, shapes and colors; and no one is immune from them.

Temptations will never be that far away. When we least expect them, they will be there again. We will be tempted ferociously at times, in times of crisis, but we should not be in despair or discouraged, because we can be prepared even though we are surprised by the temptation. We do, however, need to take responsibility for the temptation in our lives.

The Personal Quality of Temptation—v. 13b.

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"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. . ."

Here we see a common response to temptation: it is often blamed on God or others, but verse 13 says when we give way to temptation, we cannot blame God. It's easy to say: "If you really loved me you would have helped me to avoid this" or "if you are in control of all things, why have you put me in a situation that is too hard to bear?"

Remember what Adam said to God in Genesis 3:12? *"The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."* Why shouldn't we say this? James gives us two reasons that should silence our blaming of God:

Temptation does not come from Him.

James begins with some background on the nature of God. God cannot be tempted. It is against the very nature of God to be moved by temptation to do wrong. Temptation, obviously, can appeal to our cravings, but God, on the other hand, has no needs to be supplied. God's happiness is complete and satisfied.

It is also obvious God is beyond temptation, because of His perfect holiness. Man has a propensity to evil, but God has no weakness or bias on which evil can lay hold, or act, or tempt.

Because God's nature is pure, it is impossible for Him to use evil to entice *us*—to tempt us to do wrong. In the Greek language, the words in 13b indicate that God is not even indirectly involved in tempting us. He has such unmixed goodness in His attitudes and actions that there is no room for anything that would harm His children.

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Yes, God places tests in our lives—v. 2; Gen. 22:1—but His tests are always so we will pass them and inherit happiness and a crown. Remember verse 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.*" So in our failure, the blame should not go to God.

Temptation comes from our own desires—v. 14a

"... but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is **dragged away and enticed.**" It is clear:

We have to take responsibility for it because the temptation is an inside job. We alone are responsible because sin takes place only when we agree to it and follow its lead.

The process of all temptation—v. 14 The key words of the process

The process has several key words that need to be defined before we can outline what happens.

desire: This word by itself does not necessarily have a negative connotation. It refers to any desire. But in temptation, the desire to do wrong is aroused within us.

enticed: This is a fishing term meaning to lure by bait. The picture is of a fish swimming straight on course, but then drawn off toward something that seems attractive, only later to

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discover it has a deadly hook in it. Likewise, Satan creates a hunger, an enticement toward something that looks attractive, but later proves to be deadly.

dragged away: These are not forceful words. Instead of implying brutality, they suggest persuasion. There is a drawing—an impelling, a pulling from within—toward the bait.

With these definitions in mind, we are ready to look at the steps in the process of temptation.

The outline of the process

The process of temptation takes place in our hearts.

14] ". . . 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. "

The process involves four distinct steps.

First, desire receives a suggestion—an enticement.

The fishing is from Satan, who has been fishing for a long time and knows that the secret of successful fishing lies in the bait and how it is handled. Satan knows we are hungry for

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the fulfillment of our physical and spiritual needs. God promises to provide for those needs, but Satan also knows about our hunger. The fishing is designed with our desires, weaknesses, or past sins in mind. He has been studying us and testing us with various baits, so now he knows exactly which bait we like—what will entice us. Although he cannot force us to eat, he is a skilled angler—knowing when, where and how to drop bait in front of us, in order to tempt us away from the straight path. It is important to remind ourselves that the sight of, or the draw of, the bait is not a sin at this point—e.g., Jesus was tempted and yet without sin. (In Jesus' case, what was the appeal to? What caught His eye?)

Second, desire meditates on the enticements and is dragged along, or drawn toward the bait—v. 14.

Here we are entertaining the enticement in our mind... mulling it over and thinking about it. Remember, these are not forceful words. They suggest persuasion: a drawing/a pulling from within toward the bait. We are caught up in the glitter, attractiveness, promise of fulfillment, achievement, etc.; moving around and toward the bait.

Third, desire consents to the enticement, and our desire gives birth to sin.

15] *"Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin..."*

James adds to this process the familiar language of childbirth, suggesting that our desires surrender their will and reach out and take the bait of the temptation. When our desires meet with the bait, there is conception. ". . .after desire has conceived. . ." Just as two elements must be joined to create a baby—a sperm and an egg—so it is in the temptation process. When the desire of a person goes out to meet and embrace the enticement, an unholy conception takes place between the two; and the result is the birth of sin.

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Notice, we have only to embrace and consent to the desire, and a process is set in motion that takes over—the desire and the temptation will give birth to sin. If you embrace an enticement and consent to do it, you will conceive sin—you will be "pregnant" with sin. If you are pregnant with sin, after a gestation period you will give birth to it. But that's not all; our temptation has a grandchild! In the words of verse 15, after our desire and temptation gives birth to sin:

The fourth and final step is: sin grows up and gives birth to death.

15] *"Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

Our disobedience eventually results in death—Satan's ultimate aim, to destroy us. This is not initially a physical death, or none of us would be here now. We all have sinned. This death is the opposite of the crown of life described in verse 12 of last week's study. This death, like existence, will result in a sense of weakness, guilt, frustration and bitterness.

In summary: The outcome of the process of temptation is the birth of death—v. 15. *"Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."*

What a baby! What will you name it? (O.T. parents named their children after their sin—e.g., Ichabod.) The tragedy today is that many of us are seeing the grandchildren of

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our temptations bring death into our spiritual lives. Even some of our immediate family members are being influenced by these children of sin and death. Is there any option to this process? Yes!

The perfect gifts offered to those who desire to resist temptation—vv. 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 Potential Deception of Satan.

There is potential for a loss of God's gift to us through the deception of temptation—v. 16. The lies about temptation are endless, e.g., "There won't be any lasting consequences." "No one will know if I do it." The look of temptation is deceptive—it doesn't always appear as obvious temptation. There is also a possibility that we might miss what God has for us if we believe the lie that He is tempting us—v. 13.

Why would we trust the gift of someone who might be tempting us with something evil the next minute? Why would we trust a good gift that may be camouflaged evil?

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The Perfect Gifts of the Father —v. 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."

- God gives every perfect gift—v. 17a.
- God gives us gifts that are good—v. 17a.
- God gives us gifts in keeping with who He is: He is perfect and good; He is our Father; He is the Father of lights who does not change
- God chose to give us new birth in contrast to sin and death.

The birth of sin and death—vv. 14-15. 14] ". . . 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."

The birth of life—v. 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 source of life is the word of God/truth. The purpose is that we might be the firstfruits of all He created.

Conclusion

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With these gifts in mind, let me conclude with a number of practical suggestions to take with you so that the next time temptation strikes, you will be able to stand and resist.

1. Don't be surprised by temptation... expect it! The more you expect temptation, the less alarmed you'll be by all of its prowling and growling. None of us is free from its presence.

2. Don't get hooked by temptation... detect it! Look for the lie behind the temptation. Notice the enhancement of the temptation. Be alert to the pull to sin.

3. Don't be a fool... reject it! I want to begin by giving you "The ten R's of avoiding/rejecting temptation."

First, realize as we have stated, temptation will come... we can't float above it on some spiritual plane. If it came to Jesus, it will come to us—Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 8:33; Heb. 4:15.

Second, remember, you haven't sinned when temptation comes. We haven't sinned any more than Jesus did when He was tempted! Don't be discouraged, then, no matter how rotten your thoughts are. Bad thoughts don't only come to bad people, they come to good people, too.

Third, recognize that there are times, places and relationships where you will be more susceptible to temptation. Satan designs his temptations according to your vulnerable areas...where you are susceptible.

- The times—Matt. 4:1-11; Ex. 16:1-3; I Kings 19:1-4; Numbers 20:8-12.
- The places—Prov. 4:10-15, 25-27; 5:1-8.
- The relationships—I Cor. 5:1-11

Fourth, recount the Scriptural and modern-day examples of those who have failed in the past and let their examples be a warning to you—1 Cor. 10:6-13; Rom. 15:4.

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Fifth, react immediately when temptation is formed in your mind, by having the following reactions:

- Affirm that you will be able to handle the temptation because God is monitoring it—1 Cor. 10:13
- Put your spiritual armor on —Eph. 6:10-18.
- Discard your negative thoughts and actions and replace them with positive input—Eph. 4:20-5:20.
- Use the Word of God quickly—Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:12.
- Resist the enemy—Eph. 1:18-23; Eph. 2:6; James 4:7; 1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:10.

Sixth, review often who you are in Christ—Eph. 1-2.

Seventh, renounce the old man and present yourself to God—Rom. 6:1-23.

Eighth, resolve to live in the Spirit so that there will not be a place for sin—Gal. 5:16-25; Rom. 8:5; Eph. 5:18.

Ninth, remind yourself of the consequences of sin—Eph. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; Matt. 18:6-7; 1 Cor. 6:19.

Tenth, refresh and prepare yourself through prayer—Matt. 26:36-44, esp. 41; Eph. 6:18; Eph. 3:14; 6:18-20; James 1:2-8; Matt. 6:13.

How are you handling the pull and enticement of sin? Are you feeling the pull to take the wrong bait? I implore you to take the bait of life—God's Word.

The Difference Between Trials and Temptations

A Trial/Test

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A Temptation

God brings trials into our lives in order to help us grow into maturity

Satan brings into our lives in order to cause us to sin

All trials can have an element of temptation in them if we refuse to persevere in the test

All temptations can have an element of trial in them in that temptations must be resisted

Summary: A circumstance can be a trial or a temptation, depending upon our response

Application Questions for James 1:13-18

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1. How would you define temptation?

2. Why do different people struggle with different types of temptation?

3. What happens when a Christian consistently resists temptation?

4. Why do we often blame God for tempting us when we sin?

5. According to v. 14, what does Satan capitalize on when he tempts us? What situations make us especially vulnerable to his temptations?

6. Verse 15 tells us that sin gives birth to death. In what specific way is death experienced after we sin?

7. Why does v. 16 tell us that we are not to be deceived? Looking just at vv. 13-18, list and discuss as many ways as you can that people are deceived.

8. Why is it that temptations look better before we yield to them?

9. We face temptations in our weakness, but it may be that we have temptation because of our strengths and gifts. Can you share some specific temptations that might

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be prompted from your gifts? Your strengths?

10. What can we do to make temptations more manageable? What verses, prayers, tactics do you find most helpful for you when you face a temptation?

11. What temptations are used to keep us from doing what we ought to do?

12. What is the best way to resist temptations of omission?