

God Never Tempts
James 1:12-18

Slide 1

There's a folk story of Jose Rivera who, supposedly, was a bandit in south Texas in the late 1800's.

After a crime spree, where he had stolen money and jewelry, the people in that community hired a Texas ranger to track him down, arrest him and return what he had stolen.

Well, Rivera fled to Mexico where he thought he would be safe, but the ranger finally tracked him to a small border town.

Asking around, he learned that Rivera was at a small cantina in the town square. When the ranger entered the cantina, he saw an individual sitting alone at a table in the corner.

Going over to the man, the ranger tapped him on his shoulder and asked, *"Are you Jose Rivera?"* Rivera mumbled, *"No hablo ingles!"* So, the ranger found someone who could translate for him.

Through the interpreter, the ranger warned Rivera that he had two choices: tell him where he hid the money and he could walk away a free man or, if he didn't, he'd wouldn't walk out of the cantina. The young man translated the ultimatum.

Rivera pulled himself together and said to the interpreter, *"Tell him to go out of the bar, turn right at the 2nd street, walk 600 paces and he'll find a rock formation where all the jewelry and most of the money I have taken is hidden."*

The young man translating, turned to the ranger, swallowed and finally said, *"Jose Rivera said, 'Go ahead and shoot!'"*

I know this isn't a true story, but it's rather true of life. Temptation has a way of grabbing hold of us, even when we're not looking for it. Especially, when we're not looking for it.

That's part of our focus this morning as we continue looking at practical wisdom from James. Last week we looked at the first 8 verses from James, chapter 1.

After greeting God's people in verse 1, James then focused on the trials we all go through in life, which can be painful, disconcerting, and frustrating; producing an overall angst in life.

Yet James exhorted us to persevere, because when we do, we'll mature, growing in wisdom. As we become more complete, we develop into the person God has called us to be.

Again, nobody goes through trials excited about them, but we can still experience the joy and power of the Lord because of who He is in our lives.

In verse 12 today, it is really a continuation and an ending to that first section as James wrote, *"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."*

Remember that word "*persevere*" means to be constant, never wavering, just as God isn't wavering and fickle in His love for us.

The person who "*perseveres*" throughout their trials will receive the crown of life. God has promised this to us. We don't receive it by our works, we receive it by the love we have for God.

Slide 2

In verses 13-15, James moves on. He's still talking about trials, but he has another point for us to grasp.

James 1:13-15, *“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

The Greek word used for *“tempted”* in verse 13 is actually a negative word in this sense. It’s not like we saw last week where God tests us and the goal is to pass the test.

Temptation doesn’t come from God; its goal is to lead us to evil. The Greek word used for evil here means *“morally rotten character.”* That’s the purpose of temptation and that’s never the goal or plan of God.

God’s goal is to build us up, to see us succeed as we pass His testing. Failure isn’t an option in God’s kingdom.

James tells us what we don’t want to hear. We walk into temptation because we’re lured and enticed by WHOM? By our own desire!

The use of these words by James is intentional. The words *“Dragged away”* or to be *“lured”* is only used in this one passage and it comes from a hunting motif.

The goal of the hunter is to lure the animal from its safety in order to catch it, and in this sense, we’re lured from our self-restraint not to sin.

To *“entice”* also comes from hunting. Just as we would go hunting or fishing and bait a hook or set a trap with bait; we too are baited into a moral snare, designed to catch us through our selfish impulses.

That’s what Satan’s doing. He’s tempting us, luring us, baiting us to say “YES,” and just as a fisherman sets the hook, Satan does the same, catching us in our own desires.

Because, when we've embraced that desire and play it out, it becomes sin. When you think, *"I'd love to have that item,"* Satan entices you with ways to get it in an immoral way, that's the temptation, but being tempted isn't sin.

Understand, we're all tempted. Jesus was tempted immediately after His baptism. When He was in the wilderness for 40 days He was tempted by Satan in various ways, but Jesus always said no.

Satan was slick, too. He tempted Jesus with felt needs. He said, you're hungry, I can feed you.

Then he tells Jesus, you won't have to suffer, because I'll give you the kingdoms of this world. That's how Satan often goes about tempting us.

If we're not careful, we can get sucked into sin and that sin leads to death. Now, the death James is talking about can be a physical or spiritual death, but regardless, he's referring to being separated from God.

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So, how do we combat this? There are a few ways. The first comes from the words of Solomon in Proverbs 4.

Proverbs 4:23, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*

Guard our heart. That's vital for us to do. What are you allowing to flow into your hearts and minds? What are you allowing to filter in for your kids?

Guard your hearts. That's your job. It's not a once and done deal. It's an everyday matter. Guard your hearts!

Along with guarding your hearts is knowing God's Word. If you know His Word then, when you're tempted, you can either use God's Word to defeat the temptation or you'll know that what you're being asked to do is wrong.

Going along with that is what Paul says in Ephesians 6:13, *"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."*

We're called to put on God's armor: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, to take up the shield of faith, put on the helmet of salvation and grab the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

That should be a daily occurrence. As you get dressed every day, put on God's protection so that you won't be overwhelmed and beaten down by Satan, as he entices and lures you into temptation and sin.

Another way is to recognize what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."*

This is such great wisdom. Don't think you're immune to temptation. We're all tempted.

Somedays are worse than others, but it happens. So don't think you're above it and that you can't fall, we all can fall if we give in to our desires.

But what did Paul say in verse 13? Temptation is common to all people. Don't think what you're going through is any different than what others have gone through.

It may be a once in a lifetime experience, but others have experienced it, too.

Along with that temptation understand that our God is faithful and He'll not let us be tempted beyond our ability to withstand temptation.

So, if you think your temptation is too much, God doesn't think so. Which means God sees a power and strength in you, you might not believe you have.

God has provided us a way of escape so that we can endure the temptation. You know what that usually is? It's 2 letters: N - O!

Slide 4

The final section, verses 16-18, is a continuation of what James has already been telling us.

James 1:16-18, *"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."*

James says that sin will deceive you, but God never will. Sin will make you think that it's the best choice. That's the way Satan works.

To receive that *"good and perfect gift"* from God, sometimes we have to wait, and we don't like waiting.

So, what do we do? We take matters into our hands, which is exactly what Satan wants. He's going to give us a cheap substitute causing us to miss out on God's blessings.

In the end, we settle for something less than. We've given into the temptation set before us, and now we suffer from it.

But James wants us to know, to trust and to believe He's dependable. God's not like shifting shadows that are constantly moving and unpredictable.

We see daily changes, variations, and inconsistencies in the weather. We can't depend on the weather. Not so with God. He's steadfast/consistent.

He's not good some of the time and evil at other times. He's not loving at some times and hateful at others.

He's not honest on some occasions and deceptive at others. He's not powerful some times and weak at other times.

God's ALWAYS loving, ALWAYS giving, ALWAYS truthful, and ALWAYS All-powerful.

God's gift will come, but it will come according to God's Word. It will come in God's way, but when it comes, it will come from God. The wonderful thing about God is when God blesses there are no strings attached.

Slide 5

Conclusion

God brought us forth by the word of truth. Through His word we find life, renewal, a new birth, and a new hope. We become the first fruits of all creation. We become new believers.

Trust that you are a new creation. He has made us new and offered us only the best of the best. He's offered Jesus to us, and there's no better gift than Jesus!