



Bible Study Lesson: "Temptation" James 1:13-18 May 17, 2020

In **James 1:13**, notice the phrase "**when** you are tempted." Why does James use **when** and not **if**? _____

On the subject of temptation, what does James tell us in **verse 13**? _____

God does not whisper evil thoughts into our minds or try to lure us into evil situations. He is holy and good, and those characteristics guarantee the truth of James 1:13. To be holy means to be set apart, and God is set apart from evil. There is no evil in Him. He is holy.

In **James 1:14**, what verbs does James use? _____

Being "carried away or drawn away" is the beginning step in temptation: drawn away from truth and virtue. The heart is being drawn away from God.



Enticed—literally means "taken with a bait," as fish are. Picture a fish under a rock or safely hidden amidst some plants. Here comes the bait...an enticing cricket or worm. The fish sees the lure and is drawn out. Then, he takes the bait. The fisherman jerks the line, and the fish is caught; he is seized; he is held fast.

Let's make the situation personal. A lure is dropped into our lives--drawing our hearts **away** from God. Temptation, in itself, is not a sin. We are tempted daily. Our problem is that we have a **desire** (James calls it **lust**) to take the bait. Dietrich Bonhoeffer states that when we are tempted, "desire seizes mastery over the flesh. Joy in God is being distinguished," and we seek our joy somewhere else.

In 1969, comedian Flip Wilson played the character Geraldine, the fictional wife of a preacher. In the original skit, Geraldine's husband asks her why she bought a new, expensive dress. Immediately she replies, "The devil made me do it." She then goes on to explain how the devil followed her down the street and forced her to look into the window of a dress shop. The devil seduced her with praise and then forced her to sign her husband's name on the check to buy the dress. Her excuse for everything was, "The devil made me do it." That catch phrase became everyone's excuse for any poor decision or wrongdoing. Saying "The devil made me do it" meant that the devil was in control at the time. The phrase sort of absolved the person of the responsibility of his or her actions...as if he or she had no choice in the matter.

Brown's commentary states, "**The cause of sin is in ourselves**. Even Satan's suggestions do not endanger us before they are made our own."

Ellicott's commentary states, "No power of hell can force its way through the barriers which the Holy Spirit erects around the faithful and confiding soul: only by treason of the man himself can the great enemy enter in."

What would Brown and Ellicott say in response to the catch phrase, "The devil made me do it?"

In **James 1:14-15**, we learn that temptation always follows a consistent process. There has to be some type of alluring bait, and there has to be an inward desire on our part to take the bait.

Let's look at King David's sin to follow the process. (**See 2 Samuel 11**) David should have been on the battlefield with his men; however, he stayed home in Jerusalem.

There, he had time on his hands; so he wandered up to the roof and caught a glance of the very beautiful Bathsheba as she was bathing. **BAIT!** He glanced at her by accident, and that was not a sin. He could have looked away and walked away, but he took the bait. He lost his spiritual battle against temptation when he allowed himself to be lured in. **CARRIED AWAY BY HIS DESIRE!** Next, he sent his servant to get her, and he slept with her even though he knew she was Uriah's wife. **SIN!** His sin did not end with his adultery because David attempted a cover-up by arranging the death of Uriah. **DEATH!**

David had been chosen by God to be king of Israel, and the Bible describes David as "a man after God's own heart" (**1 Samuel 13:14**). Everyone is tempted, and anyone can be lured into sin. The good news is that **we can choose** to resist the desire, reject the bait, and walk away. When we allow temptation to lure us in, we eventually sin; and sin leads to death. In David's case, his sin resulted in the physical death of Uriah, but that is not the meaning of "death" in James. If it were, we would all be dead already! In Jewish thinking, to be dead described having a poor quality of life. The death James is talking about is the opposite of the abundant life found in Christ that we experience while we are on this earth. **Make a list of some of the sins people are tempted to commit every day.**

Now, read **Galatians 5:22**, and list the fruits of the Spirit. _____

See the contrast in those two lists? When we sin, we are not living true life in the Spirit. What else does **Galatians 5:24-25** say about those who follow Christ? _____

What is James' command in **James 1:16**? _____
Based on the previous verses about temptation, what do you think he means?

In **James 1:17-18**, James turns to our source of victory over temptation. All **good things** come from the Father of lights--as opposed to coming from Satan, whom Jesus called "the father of lies" in John 8:44. James also says that in our Heavenly Father, there is no variation or shifting shadow. Unlike a shifting shadow, God never changes. The one who gives good and perfect gifts is the one who created us and gave us **his truth**. As his "first fruits," we, out of all creation, are his prized possessions.

Application to our lives:

To have victory over temptation, we can dwell on the **good things** that come from the Father of lights. (**Philippians 4:8**: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.")

Furthermore, we can live in **His truth**. We have his Word. Reading it, memorizing it, and meditating on it will help us stand strong whenever we are tempted. When Satan tried to lure Jesus away from being the type of Messiah that fulfilled God's plan, Jesus quoted scripture to resist that temptation. **See Luke 4:1-13**.

For memorization and meditation: **1 Corinthians 10:13** "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." **James 4:7**: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Prayer: Father of lights who gives only good gifts to me, thank you. Help me, O God, to guard my heart. Let me not give in to anything that draws my heart away from you. When I am tempted, give me the presence of mind and the strength to resist so that I may not sin against you. Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:3-4) Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10). Let the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14) In Jesus' name, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Blessings!

The Pastor