

July 12, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
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The Book of James, Lesson 1
Trials and Temptations

The Book of James

Today we begin this series of our studies and meditations based on the book of James for the month of July and August. This was written by the brother of our Lord Jesus, who called himself a servant of God and Jesus Christ. It was basically written to Jewish Christians who were scattered in many nations. James talks in this book about trials and tribulations, how to apply the Word of God in our daily life, the worldliness in the church and Christian perspective.

In this lesson we will study James chapter 1:1-18

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations:

Greetings.

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.



⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and

withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

¹² 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.

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 person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶ Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. 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.

Outline:

What are Trials and Temptations?

Source of Temptation

Purpose of Temptation

How to Face Temptation

TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

The Greek word *peir* does duty for both these concepts, but in English we have two words: Trials and Temptations.

Trial: A trial is an outward circumstance that can pose difficulties to our faith. Trials can be poverty, persecutions, all kind of difficulties, sickness etc. God does test or put us to trial like he did to Abraham, when He asked him to sacrifice his only son Isaac, who was born in his old age.

Genesis 22:1-2

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am,” he replied.

² Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

(For full story, read on to verse 18)

Temptation: “A temptation is the inner enticement to sin.” Inner desires for which I am responsible.

(The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, Elwell and Baker, pg. 1154)

Lust is the piece of our lower nature which begins as a fine thread of a spider’s web and, if unchecked, becomes as strong as an iron. I alone can put the sequence of sin into operational mode, (vs.15).

The sequence is: thought-deed-lust-penalty-sin-death. I have to choose between moral patterns, to live by the standard set in God’s word, by the Ten Commandments (which have not been repealed), or live by my own situational ethics.

When one becomes a Christian, he continues to face temptations. No one is immune to any sin. The moment this truth is realized, that we all are vulnerable, it will help us to counter or handle it.

WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION?

A. It is not God.

God never tempts his people (vs 13). He never entices to sin or desires that Christians fall. Believers cannot blame God for falling into sin.

(The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible)

B. It is our own “evil desires” that are the source of the temptation (vs. 14). Sin entices and seeks to entrap us. Later James mentions the tempter,

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

“Even the suggestions of evil do not occasion danger before they are made our own.” – (J.A. Bengel in *The Gnomon of the New Testament*, quoted in *The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*)

He knocks at the door of every individual.
Remember Cain:

Genesis 4:6-7

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

The impulse of sin is alive in all of us. Sin is conceived when we succumb to temptation and if we do nothing to cut off this growth and maturation takes place, death is the inevitable result (vs 15).

(*The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*)

C. I am responsible for my temptation (vs 14-15).

“You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building nests in your hair.”



“We are inclined to lay blame for a crime on everyone except the criminal and sin on everyone except the sinner.” (Pg. 18 *Pastor’s Annual 2012*)

D. The source of temptation is our own desires and lusts. David, when he was supposed to be on the battlefield, was on the rooftop of the palace watching others. He looked at Bathsheba. He should have stopped there. He continued to look. His lust and desire continued to take every opportunity to have her. They lead, one to the other. Lust – covetousness of neighbor's wife, adultery and then murder of the Hittite Uriah, the faithful soldier in David’s army and husband of Bathsheba.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF TEMPTATION?

A. It is to test our faith (Trying of our faith vs. 3)

B. Opportunity to prove one's loyalty to God, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did.

Daniel 3:16-18

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

(For the full story, read all of Daniel chapter 3)

Increase our maturity, endurance and patience (vs. 3-4).

C. To develop dependence on God.

Trials are good for us. Testing produces patience. Patience makes one perfect and complete. It teaches us wisdom. Faith means not to doubt.

Wisdom is single-minded not double-minded.

A double-minded person is unstable.

1 Peter 1:6-7, In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Romans 5:3-5, "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

James 1:12. "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."

James 1:2-4, “Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

James said that if one lacks wisdom, he should ask of God who gives to us liberally, (vs. 5).

When Job’s faith was tested, Satan failed, and Job conquered temptation. Job lost everything, then said, Yet, I will trust in God.

Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” Job 1:8, 2:3

Can God say this about us today?

HOW DO WE FACE TEMPTATIONS?

A. Prayer.

“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them (disciples). “Get up and Pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

- Jesus, Luke 22:46; Matthew 26:41



Jesus prayed often and long. We should do as He did. We are not able to face the circumstances in our lives when we depend on our own wisdom. James reminds us to ask God for wisdom, as Solomon did. That asking is prayer.

Lean not on own understanding
Solomon asks for wisdom

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

1 Kings 3:5, 9

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

...

⁹“Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

Ravi Zacharias, a well-known preacher who has recently passed, also speaks of how he asks for God’s wisdom when faced with a tough situation.

B. Absolute faith.

The Word of God as Jesus answered the DEVIL. See Luke 4:1-13.

C. Count it joy.

As Job said, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10)

Many Christians have been placed in difficult situations or circumstances or were persecuted on account of their faith.

Christians should have the right feeling of joy - “count it all joy,” (vs. 1).

What happened to Job was not an accident or the work of the enemy. If Satan brought calamity to Job, he was, for the time at least, “God’s angel” doing a painful but divine work. Even Satan is under God’s control, and could do nothing to Job without God’s permission. Job kept his trust in God, and said

Job 19:25

I know that my redeemer lives,

and that in the end he will stand on the earth.

Ephesians 2:3-9

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in

mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

D. Life in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-18; 24-26

So, I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

...

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking each other.

Before the temptation comes, we have already crucified and buried our sinful desires.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The Spirit of God allows us to conquer, to say “No,” and resist the devil, and he will flee from you, (James 4:7).

The Christian has learned never to connect his trials with personal sins. It is the consciousness of connection between person sin and personal suffering that makes the bitterness of suffering. That bitterness the Christian should never know.

Trials assure us of God's gracious interest in our higher and spiritual welfare - Grace is given to us.

Review:

What are Trials and Temptations?

Trials are outward circumstances, Temptations are inner desires and enticements.

Source of Temptation

Not God, but our own evil desires.

Purpose of Temptation

To test our faith, and make us mature.

How to Face Temptation

Pray that you may not fall into temptation.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

- the Lord's prayer Matthew 6:13

Prayer will strengthen us against temptation.

Seek God's Grace, Word, Life, and Spirit.

Remember again Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who relied upon the Power and Presence of God, and Grace of God, as they were living in His Spirit. In this way, they were able to face the situation, and were victorious. No harm came to them, and God was glorified.

Psalm 23:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You *are* with me.

Trials cultivate all the finer elements of character and in that time of trial the Christian man rejoices. But if we “find joy in tribulation” it can only be the joy of faith, with that faith-vision which can discern meaning.