

JAMES 1

A STUDY THROUGH THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

The Blame Game

James 1:13-15

James' Agenda This Week

He has been writing much on the subject of trials, but he does not want us to conclude that because God permits us to experience trials that He is the source of temptation.

That deduction might encourage us to give in to sin.

James 1:13-15

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. **14** But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Three Key Terms for Today

1. “Tempted”
2. “Lust” (“Desire”)
3. “Sin”

1. “Tempted”

πειράζω (peirazō)

This connotes a
provocation to sin.

James 1:13 Plainly Says:

**God CANNOT
be Tempted by
Evil**

The Character of God

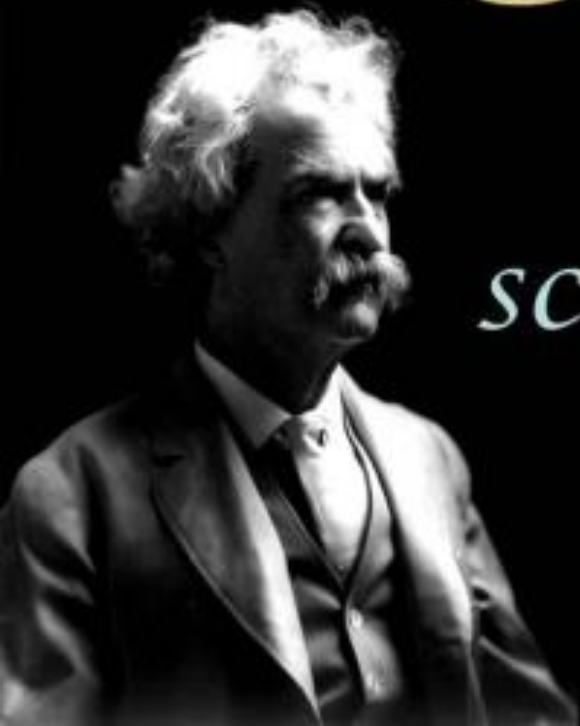
- No evil can have its way with God.
- He is immune to any of its provocations.
- There can be nothing evil about that which concerns God.
- Therefore there can be nothing evil about His ways with His people.

And Yet...

God:

*“The most popular
scapegoat for our sins.”*

Mark Twain





Why
do BAD
things

HAPPEN
to **GOOD**
PEOPLE

Question:

**Does all
Temptation
Equal Sin?**



Therefore...

Unless we want to imply that Jesus was a sinner, we must affirm that not all temptation equals sin.

But in saying this, we must be careful to define what we mean by temptation and precisely what our temptation has in common with Jesus'.

Too Often...

- We are guilty of projecting our own sinful experiences back on to Jesus.
- Our sinful experience of temptation is not the paradigm for understanding Jesus' sinless experience of temptation.

Two Facts to Understand

1. Jesus was tempted in every way as we are.
2. Jesus' experience of temptation was in no way like ours.

Hebrews 4:15

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

Jesus' was "without sin"

- There was no aspect of Jesus' temptation that ever involved sin on His part.
- He had no desires that predisposed Him to sin.
- His response to external pressures never resulted in an evil thought or attraction.

2 Types of Temptations

1. Temptation that arises outside of our desire.
 - Jesus' temptations were in this category.
2. Temptation that is caused *by* our own sinful desires.
 - Our temptations are often of this sort.

John Owen wrote:

“Now what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to a man’s consideration, which, if he close withal, it is evil, it is sin unto him. This is sin’s trade...It is raising up in the heart, and proposing unto the mind and affections, that which is evil; trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it will carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now when such a temptation comes from without, it is unto the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unless it be consented unto; but the very proposal from *within*, it being the soul’s own act, is sin.”



Our Sin Nature

When a sinner gives into temptation,
the transgression creates new
temptations that may themselves be
sinful.



The Snowball Effect

- Let's say our sin is covetousness.
- If we continually give in to it, we are then tempted to become angry with anyone who does not give us what we want.
- So, the temptation to anger was our own covetousness.
- A sinful temptation (covetousness) provides temptation for another sin (anger) to emerge.



When Temptation Wins...

We quickly realize that when we give in to temptation that sin doesn't even come close to satisfying our sinful desire.

In fact, it awakens our sinful desires even more!

Romans 7:7-12

7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” **8** But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. **9** I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; **10** and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; **11** for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. **12** So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

So, It is Possible...

- To be tempted and not sin.
- **Biblically speaking, temptation begins as a testing that is external to desire and that is therefore not necessarily sinful.**
- But when sinners succumb to temptation, they create internal temptations to sin that are themselves sinful.

James' Point

- The temptation in “each one is tempted” is explicitly tied to the sinner’s inner inclination.
- Literally, “each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed *by his own lust.*”

2. “Lust”

ἐπιθυμία (epithymia)



Lust

Love

On One Hand: Romans 1:24

“Therefore God gave them over in the **lusts** of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”

And Ephesians 2:3

“Among them we too all formerly lived in the **lusts** of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

On the Other: Philippians 1:23

“But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the **desire** to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better”

And 1 Timothy 3:1

“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he **desires** to do.”

Context, Context, Context

- ἐπιθυμία is good when it is directed toward something morally praiseworthy.
- ἐπιθυμία is evil when it is directed toward something morally blameworthy.
- So, in this context, “lust” is not neutral; it is a desire that “carries away” and “entices”; and thus...

The Desires Themselves Are Sinful!

Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James*

“James now attributes temptation to each person’s evil desire... [defined as] any human longing for what God has prohibited.”

In other words, when such illicit desire conceives, it inevitably gives birth to sin because it *is* sin!

What's the Big Deal?

There is a large percentage of the church that believes that sinful desires are totally acceptable, as long as I don't act upon them.



The Space in Our Morality



External Temptation () Inner Desire

The leap is easy and natural for us...



No Physical Need

Ever trumped Jesus' desire to do
the will of the Father.

Maybe she was beautiful.

Maybe there was bait to lust there.

She had already made herself sexually
available to at least 5 different men.

And He was alone with her...

John 4:27a, 31-32, 34

27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman...**31** Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” **32** But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” **34** Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

But He Was Perfect.

There was absolutely no place for temptation to land in Jesus' heart.

He always got it right in His heart and in His deeds.

That is the difference between Jesus and you and me.

Matthew 5:27-28

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; **28** but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

3. “Sin”

ἁμαρτία (hamartia)

The offspring of lust

James' Imagery



Except This Offspring

Is a parasite, nurtured
by the life of our own
sin nature, and instead
of ushering in new life,
it leads to death.

We All Know: Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”





Endure vs. Entice

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren,
when you *encounter various trials

**periptō* - to fall into as to be encompassed

14 But each one is tempted when
he is carried away and enticed by
his own lust.

Endure vs. Entice

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance

15a Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin

Endure vs. Entice

4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

15b and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Will You Endure or Be Enticed?

Path #1 (2-4)

1. Joyfully
Encounter Trial
2. Respond in Faith
3. Endure
4. Become perfectly
mature

Path #2 (14-15)

1. Carried Away and
Enticed
2. Indulge in desire
3. Give birth to sin
4. Death

I See a Parallel: Gal. 5:16-17a

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. **17** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another...

Galatians 5:24-25

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Why? James 1:12

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

