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The Christian and Temptation

James 1:12-18

Introduction

1. The story of Adam and Eve and their sin in the garden is familiar most, if not all, of us.
2. God placed the two of them in the Garden of Eden, a paradise, if you will.
 - a. In this garden God has “caused to grow every tree that [was] pleasing to the sight and good for food” (Genesis 2:9).
 - b. He had also placed the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden (Genesis 2:9).
 - c. There was a river which flowed out of Eden to water the garden.
3. Adam and Eve had everything they could want — what more could they need?
4. There was one command which God gave to Adam, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16b-17).
5. One day, however, Satan, in the form of a serpent spoke to Eve and asked her, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1)
6. Eve responded, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.” (Genesis 3:2-3).
7. The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4b-5).
8. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit

and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate.” (Genesis 3:6)

9. You know the rest of the story — instantly, they realized they were both naked, so they took some fig leaves, sewed them together and made loincloths for themselves.
10. Later, when they heard God walking in the Garden, they hid themselves.
11. When God called to Adam and asked him where he was, Adam said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10)
12. God then asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Genesis 3:11)
13. It is Adam’s response that I want to draw your attention to this evening, because it brings out the focus of our lesson.
14. “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12)
15. Who, ultimately, did Adam blame for his having sinned?
 - a. On the surface, he blamed Eve — “she gave me from the tree, and I ate”
 - b. But, ultimately, he blamed God — “the woman You gave to be with me” — in other words, God it is your fault that I sinned.

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16. There is an important truth which I would like for us to remember as we work through this lesson tonight: *None of us will not make it as a Christian if we do not learn to overcome temptation in our lives.*
17. The fact that those of us who are Christians continue to experience temptation is not an indication that we are out of fellowship with God.
18. No, temptation will be part of our experience throughout our time on this earth, even as it was the experience of the Lord Himself (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).

“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18)

“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.” (Hebrews 4:15)

19. Our maturity as Christians is not measured the infrequency of temptations in our lives, but by the infrequency of our giving in to those temptations.
20. Tonight I would like for us to consider three things:
 - a. The character of God
 - b. How temptation works in our lives
 - c. The importance of persevering through trials

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I. The Character of God

A. GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED BY EVIL (v. 13)

“God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone”
(James 1:13b).

1. God is unable to be tempted — He is “untemptable.”
2. Evil has never had an appeal for Him.
3. It is repugnant and abhorrent to Him.
4. Because of that, God has never tempted us to sin.

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B. GOD DOES TEST US IN ORDER TO PROVE AND IMPROVE OUR CHARACTER

1. “God tested Abraham” (Genesis 22:1) when He ordered him to sacrifice his son Isaac.
2. He tested Israel when He allowed the people to remain surrounded by pagan nations in the promised land, “in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.”
(Judges 2:22)
3. He tested King Hezekiah by leaving him to his own devices in his reception of the Babylonian envoys (2 Chronicles 32:31; cf. 2 Kings 20:12-19).

“... God left him alone only to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.” (2 Chronicles 32:31)

4. While God may test or prove his servants in order to strengthen their faith, he never seeks to induce us to sin and so destroy their faith.
5. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13, KJV).
6. In other words, we are asking God, don’t allow us to be tempted in a way that will overpower us and cause us to sin.
7. Paul said, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Slide 5**C. SATAN IS THE DECEIVER**

1. It is always Satan’s goal to deceive us.
2. He deceived Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:4-5)

“The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” (Genesis 3:4–5)

3. He sought to deceive our Lord (Matthew 4:6).

“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’ ”” (Matthew 4:6, cf. Psalm 91:11,12)

4. Jesus called him
 - a. “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).
 - b. “Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).
5. Paul said he “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).
6. God does not tempt us, but gives us good in our lives (James 1:17).

“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down

from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”
(James 1:17)

7. He is the One who “brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (James 1:18).

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II. Temptation's Work In Our Lives

A. EVERY TRIAL BRINGS TEMPTATION

1. Financial difficulty can tempt us to question God's providence in our lives.
2. The death of a loved one can tempt us to question God's love for us.
3. The suffering of the righteous poor and the ease of the unrighteous rich can tempt us to question God's justice, or even His existence. (Cf. Psalm 73:2-9, 16-20)
4. For this reason, testing almost always includes temptation.
5. Temptation is itself a test.
6. This “persevering under trial” (v. 12), of which James speaks, demands that we overcome these kinds of temptations.

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B. THE SOURCE OF OUR TEMPTATION (v. 14)

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.” (James 1:14)

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” (James 1:14, KJV 1900)

1. The word translated “lust” simply means “desire”.
2. It can be either good or bad.
3. Sometimes it refers to legitimate desires (Luke 22:15; Philippians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:17)

“And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with

you before I suffer;" (Luke 22:15)

"But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;" (Philippians 1:23)

"But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face." (1 Thessalonians 2:17)

4. **Hunger is a legitimate desire, but if it tempts us to steal to satisfy our hunger, we sin.**
5. **In 1 John 2:16, after warning us to avoid the love of the world and the things in it, John lists three sinful desires:**
 - a. "the lust of the flesh"
 - b. "the lust of the eyes"
 - c. "the boastful pride of life"
6. **Just as Adam and Eve gave in to each of these desires . . .**
 - a. "the lust of the flesh" — **the fruit of the "tree was good for food"** (Genesis 3:6)
 - b. "the lust of the eyes" — "it was a delight to the eyes," (Genesis 3:6)
 - c. "the pride of life" — "the tree was desirable to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6)

. . . so each of us, according to James, "is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust (desire)" (James 1:14, NASB95).
7. **James describes our temptation using the language of a fisherman:**
 - a. The fish is "drawn away" from his lair and "enticed" to follow the lure because of its color, speed and peculiar wiggle until he opens his mouth and swallows the jig.
 - b. In the same way, we are tempted by our own illicit desires (lusts) so that when the temptation passes by, we are drawn away from those things which keep us safe.

- c. In a moment we forget who and what we are and throw caution to the wind and bite.
- 8. We are drawn away and lured to the hook by our own lusts — we can't blame anyone else.

Slide 8**C. THE COURSE OF TEMPTATION**

“Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” (James 1:15, NASB95)

“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (James 1:15, KJV 1900)

1. Now James uses human life from birth to death to describe the ultimate outcome of temptation when we give in to it.
2. Temptation involves the sinful desire within us which is enticed by the superficial attractiveness of sin.
3. If we do not resist the temptation, but welcome it, then it conceives and gives birth to sin.
4. This child, known as sin, grows up and produces its own offspring, death — spiritual death and ultimately eternal separation from God.

Slide 9**III. Learn To Endure Trials In Your Life****A. CONSIDER IT ALL JOY (JAMES 1:2-4)**

1. The trials we face in life are the testing of our faith (v. 3).
2. The testing of our faith “produces endurance” (NASB), “steadfastness” (ESV), “patience” (NKJV) (v. 3).
3. The “perfect result” (NASB), “work” (KJV, NKJV) of that endurance is that we become “perfect (mature) and complete, lacking in nothing” (v. 4).

Slide 10**B. GOD BLESSES US WHEN WE PERSEVERE UNDER OUR TRIALS (JAMES 1:12)**

“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.” (James 1:12, NASB95)

1. When we remain steadfast and persevere in our trials by enduring temptation, we are “approved” of God (v. 12; cf. John 12:43; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).
2. We are approved of God, because we have endured the trials and resisted the temptations and become “mature and complete” in our lives as Christians.
3. As a result, we “will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (v. 12b).

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Conclusion

1. Let me close tonight with four practical ways to overcome temptation:
 - a. *Study and know yourself.*
 - 1) Know where you are vulnerable and devise some ways to protect yourself.
 - 2) Others may be able to handle situations where you would fall.
 - b. *Avoid tempting situations.*
 - c. *Have a predetermined commitment to follow Christ and to flee temptation.*
 - d. *Always keep before you the terrible end of temptation — death.*
 - 1) The world glamorizes sin.
 - 2) Realize that the picture painted by the world is far from the truth.
2. Remember, God desire is for your well-being and your eternal salvation — don't let Satan keep you from that destination.