

Introduction:

Did anyone face anyone trials this morning on the way to church? Maybe your morning went something like this: You feel a tap on your shoulder at 5am accompanied with the words, “Dad, I had a bad dream. Can I get in the bed with you?” Once they hop into the bed, you realize that your child not only had a bad dream but has also wet the bed. Sigh. After helping them change clothes and removing the sheets, you hop back in bed . . . with your child and your spouse. The next two hours are filled with feet kicking against your back, fights for the pillow, and complete unrest. You haven’t even woken up yet and trials are coming left and right. By 7am, everyone in the house is awake and you can tell it’s just a normal day. The kids are fighting and not listening. Your spouse is laughing at the commotion and providing little help. You think to yourself: “My kids are driving me crazy. My wife makes me so angry.” And then you remember Tanner’s challenge from James 1: “Count it all joy when you face trials.”

Context:

- None of us, if given the choice, would plead to God for him to send trials our way. In fact, we see trials as something that you should do everything in your power to avoid.
- But trials are opportunities to grow and be like Jesus. In fact, without trials we would remain immature, incomplete, and deficient Christians.
- Trials are the HEAT in our lives and “. . . the soil of trial can produce a harvest of either Fruit or Thorns” (Lane and Tripp).
 - Last week Tanner highlighted the FRUIT that we should all pursue in trials. We should seek to respond with joy in trials knowing that God is using them to shape us into the likeness of Christ. Trials can lead to significant spiritual growth.
 - Today, in verses 13-18, James is going to address the other side of the coin. Trials can also reveal thorns in our lives. Trials can also lead to temptation and sin.

Read James 1:13-18

Transition: If you are going to resist and overcome temptation, you must embrace three core truths:

I. God is not the source of your temptation (1:13).

A. God allows you to be tempted but he does not tempt you to sin.

RHC’s statement on providence: “God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent.”

- Two implications:
 - God cannot be tempted because he is not susceptible to any such desire for evil.
 - God allows us to be tested but he never seeks to induce us to sin or destroy our faith.

B. God will never allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV)

- In view of 1 Cor. 10:13, God is sovereign over all temptation, and thus you can never say:
 - “This temptation is more than I can bear.”
 - “There is no way out of this temptation.”

You may be in the middle of some of the hardest temptation that you've ever faced in your life. Know this: God is for you, not against you. If you are going to wage war against sin and temptation, you must believe that God is working in you and with you for his perfect will. There is HOPE because God is faithful and sovereign. He is on your side.

II. Your own Sinful Desire is the Source of Temptation (1:14-15).

A. Temptation is not sin.

- Desire must *conceive* to produce sin. The implication: just because you experience temptation does not mean you are out of fellowship with God. All believers will experience temptation until we die. It is how we respond to temptation that determines whether we sin or not.

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

- “Christian maturity is not indicated by the infrequency of temptation but by the infrequency of succumbing to temptation” (Moo).

B. Your sinful desire causes you to sin.

- James places the responsibility for temptation and sin squarely on the shoulders of each human being (“each person”; “own desire”).
- Trials do not cause you to sin. If you respond sinfully to the trials God sends it is because your hearts have chosen to do so.

1. The bait and hook (14).

- This metaphor comes from fishing: the bait on the hook entices the fish, and once hooked, the fish would be dragged away.

2. Conception and birth (15).

- How does desire conceive and give birth to sin? James doesn't tell us but he must have in mind the active response of a person who is tempted.
- “If a person should welcome rather than resist that temptation, desire conceives; and if not turned away immediately, it produces sin” (Moo).

How does sin work?

- Sin is crafty.
- Sin is deceitful (it lies to you).
 - Sin questions the goodness of God: “God is withholding good things from you. He doesn't want you to be happy.”
- Sin is alluring.
- Sin betrays (it kills and brings death).
 - “Sin first courts, and then kills . . . Whoever sin kills, it betrays” (Thomas Watson). Sin promises blessing but in the end delivers curse.

So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6 ESV)

Important implications for understanding the root and cause of sin and temptation:

- Our tendency is to play the blame game and point the finger at others (God or our circumstances).
- Have you ever said,
 - “My spouse makes me so angry!”
 - “Will you pray for me, we’re having marriage problems. Oh, me? No, I’m fine. I just gotta deal with these marriage problems.”
 - “My kids are driving me crazy!”
 - “This traffic makes me nuts!”

“Trials do not cause us to be what we have not been; rather, they reveal what we have been all along. The harvest the trial produces is the result of the roots already in our hearts” - Lane and Tripp.

- Our circumstances must not allow us to excuse sin.
 - My spouse is not my biggest problem, I am.
 - My marriage is not my biggest problem, I am.
 - My kids are not my biggest problem, I am.
 - Traffic is not my biggest problem, I am.
- How should we respond to sin? From “When Sinners Say I do” by Dave Harvey
 - 1. In humility, suspect yourself.
 - 2. In integrity, inspect yourself.
 - 3. Admit that circumstances only reveal existing sin.
- What circumstances in your life right now do you use to excuse sin in your life?

3. God is the Giver of New Birth (1:16-18).

- Verses 17-18 state the positive side of the case made in vv. 13-15. God is not the author of temptation or of anything evil. In fact, he is the one who gives good gifts to his people, preeminently the gift of the new birth.
- What does James teach us about God?
 - 1. God is the Father of Lights**
 - a. God created the great lights (sun, moon and stars).
 - b. Not only is God a powerful God, he will continually care for the world he has made.
 - 2. God does not change.**
 - a. “Variation” - connotes the orderly and periodic movements of sun, moon, planets and stars.
 - b. “Shadow due to change” - could refer to the phases of the moon or to the constant variation of night and day.
 - c. Meaning: James is using the constant motion of the heavenly bodies to make a central point about God: “he does not change like the heavens do” (Moo).
 - d. God is a rock! He is a fortress!
 - 3. God is the giver of all good things.**
 - a. One of the main temptations to sin is that God is withholding something good from you. This truth will radically change the way you view sin and the promises of God.
 - 4. God gives new birth.**
 - a. “Of his own will”: as your will and desires give birth to sin, God wills and desires your redemption.
 - b. The “word of truth” is the instrument through which God brings people to life.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (Ephesians 1:13 ESV)

The Point: You can overcome sin and temptation in trials by living in light of the new life that God gives.

- **How can you overcome sin and temptation?**

1. Come to Christ

- Until you respond to the gospel in repentance and faith, you will be unable to overcome sin and temptation.

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24 ESV)

The challenge of 2 Timothy 2:22: *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 ESV)*

2. Flee Sin and Temptation (Put off)

- If you do not turn away from temptation immediately, it will produce sin.
- Say “no” within the first five seconds. In the first two seconds we shout, "NO! Get out of my head!" In the next two seconds we cry out: "O God, in the name of Jesus, help me. Save me now. I am yours."

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11 ESV)

*But that is not the way you learned Christ!--assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, **to put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and **to put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:20-24 ESV)*

3. Pursue Righteousness (Put on)

- Since sin is crafty, deceitful and alluring, we must combat temptation with truth – the Word of God.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14 ESV)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16 ESV)

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (Romans 8:5-6 ESV)

4. Embrace Community (Along with)

Each morning that greets me is full of hope. Not because I am successful at what I am doing, Or because the people near me appreciate me, Or because circumstances are easy, But because God is, and he is my Father. To look at the morning any other way, Is to be a lie. To live in hope is to live in truth; To live in truth is to bring him glory; To bring God glory in my daily living, Is the highest form of worship (Lane and Tripp).