

Lead Us Not Into Temptation – James 1:13-18

Introduction:

Several years back a comedian by the name of Flip Wilson used to do a routine where, when he was accused of doing something wrong, his response would be, “The devil made me do it!” People laughed, but it really points us to a serious problem in humanity. We tend to like to blame others when we mess up. The blame game can be traced right to the beginning of time. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. James picks up this theme in the verses before us in this study and causes the reader to own his or her own part in the struggles we face in life. In the process we get a glimpse of what God is really like, not what some have portrayed Him to be like. May this study help us as we continue to pray as the Lord taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation...”

Temptation’s Source – James 1:13-15

1. Verse 12 left us with the promise that those who persevere under temptation will be blessed by God. It was a given that Christians would face temptations or trials. But this leads to the question, where do temptations or trials come from? James tells us in verse 13 where they do not come from. Where is that?
2. Why might James have to correct the view of some about the source of temptations?
3. What two things do we learn about God in verse 13? Why is this important?
4. Verse 14 starts with the word “but” which means, though we may be looking the wrong way if we think God is the source of temptations, there is a correct way to look. Where does James challenge us to look for the source of temptations in our lives?
5. In verse 14 James uses some very powerful words that speak to the inner battle that leads to temptation. What words does he use? Why?

6. Verse 14 uses the metaphor of something being hunted and trapped. Verse 15 shifts to a new metaphor. What metaphor is used here?
7. Follow the progression in James' thought in verse 15. Describe the journey outlined here.
8. Is desire wrong? When is it okay and when is it bad?
9. The word for sin here, *hamartia*, literally means "missing the mark." How does this apply in this situation?
10. When James speaks of death in verse 15, what would he be referring to?
11. Does James believe we are the only source of temptation in our lives, or can he point you to any other source? (cf. James 4:7)

True Image of God – James 1:16-18

12. In verse 16 James says he does not want the readers to be deceived. What might they be deceived about after what has been said about temptations?
13. James makes it clear that we see God as a good, loving, kind God. How does he do this in verse 17?
14. How is God described in verse 17? Looking at Isaiah 9:2, John 1:5 and John 9:5, what place does light vs darkness have in the knowledge of God?
15. Who, then, is ultimately responsible for our lives and all the good we experience in life? (cf. v. 17)
16. What does it mean when it says "there is no variation of shadow due to change" (v. 17 ESV) or "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (v. 17

KJV)? (NIV translation may be helpful) How does this relate to Hebrews 13:8?

17. In verse 15 our desire gives birth to sin which leads to death. In verse 18 James parallels that with what God brings forth. Outline James' thought here.
18. Verse 18 starts with the phrase "Of his own will" (ESV, KJV) or "he chose" (NIV). What does God intentionally choose to do?
19. "Brought us forth" (ESV) or "chose to give us birth" (NIV) are some of the most feminine images of God in the NT (v. 18). Does this image surprise you?

"Both Hebrew and Greek (LXX) words for wisdom are feminine nouns (*hokma* and *Sophia*). If James is a wisdom book or influenced by OT wisdom tradition, **truth** may function as the equivalent for Lady Wisdom (Prov. 8). If so, James may imply that **desire** is a seductress, the mother of Sin and sinners. But Lady Wisdom (= **truth**) is the legitimate mother of faithful believers." (C. Jeanne Orjala Serrao, NBBC: James, pp. 64-65))

20. In verse 18 we are called the "first fruits" of creation. What does this mean?

Conclusion:

Early church fathers had a problem with this passage. Does not scripture clearly say "God tested Abraham (and David and Israel)"? Some were concerned that if we say God is not the source of temptation then he is not the source of everything. So the solution they came up with was to say God would not tempt us to do evil, but he will test us if it leads to virtue.

But James does not blame God for our temptations, nor does he blame Satan in this passage ("The devil made me do it!") The blame lands squarely on us – we are the source of temptation because of the misuse of our desires. Desires in

themselves are not wrong. Jesus desired bread after fasting forty days in the wilderness, and Satan tried to use that desire to tempt him to do the wrong thing. We desire things that are not good for us, especially as we get our eyes off Jesus and onto the things of this world. Satan may flash things before our eyes, and God creates a world full of alluring things, but in the end, the buck stops with us.

Yet note the good news in our text – we can be “born again” through “the word of truth.” God can give birth in us a desire for the things that please Him through our relationship with Jesus (the Word) and the application of that Word through the Holy Spirit. God gives good gifts to those who love him (Matt. 7:11 and Luke 11:13).

When will our desires no longer “lead us into temptation”? Likely in heaven, though temptations will lose their power the longer we walk with God and learn from Him.