

“The Temptation within”

Today as we continue our study of James. We will continue to connect the dots that James lays out for legit Christian living. We began this series with the pressure test. If you will remember we looked at trials and troubles as pressure in our lives. And we saw how God uses the pressure to bend us. Not break us. He does this in order to give us the tools for true spiritual growth and the ability to overcome anything that Satan or the world throw at us.

And we saw how surrendering to the worlds wisdom and not accepting and following the wisdom of God in our lives often causes us to waver to be blown by the winds of this world.

I want to look at the cause of pressure. The cause of those winds in our lives. The root cause of sin. And I want to discuss some misconceptions about temptation.

Please open up your bibles to

James Chapter 1

Let us continue where we left off last week with verse 12

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

This is a recap from last week

We saw how when we overcome the pressure

When we pass the test

We receive the blessing that God has for us

He uses –listen- key on the word uses here..

Uses trials - troubles and pressure in our lives to produce endurance or perseverance.

In order to strengthen us, grow us, and give us the tools to get it done.

But remember I told you just a moment ago to key on the word uses.

God uses trials to grow us.

But he does not send the temptations that cause the trials.

He tests us, but he does not tempt us.

Let's read verse 13

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Many people want to blame God for tempting them when the wheels fall off of their lives.

But James shows us in scripture that this just is not true.

He says, that God never tempts anyone to do evil. There is no evil in God. None.

And he will not and cannot use evil to tempt anyone.

So that excuse won't hold up anymore.

So we tend to move on to other excuses for our temptations and our surrender to them which might sound like:

"It's not my fault"

"I couldn't help it"

"It was just a mistake"

"Everyone else is doing it"

"Nobody's perfect"

"I didn't know it was wrong"

"I was pressured into it"

Or one of the most common excuse

"The Devil made me do it"

But in order to get legit, in order to deal with temptation, in order to overcome temptation, we must first admit where it comes from. It does not come from God. He will use the trouble in our lives to grow us, but He never tempts us to do evil.

The devil made me do it many claim.

Yes, I agree.

The devil uses many tricks to lure us into sin, but once again notice I said uses.

Why would I say uses? Because James says our temptation come from inside of us

Lets read verses 14-15 ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Temptation comes from inside of us.

God uses the trials that surrendering to temptation bring. And Satan uses our own temptations as lures to pull us away. But at the end of the day he can only use what we already struggle with.

Let's use the example of a can of snuff and a piece of cake

Few if any of us would be tempted by the tobacco but the cake is another thing altogether.

The fisherman must figure out what it is that tempts that fish. He does not create the temptation. He just preys on it. So understanding that temptation comes from our own hearts is a big key to defending against temptation.

We can't blame God.

We can't blame others.

We must take responsibility.

----- Pause-----

You all know the story of Samson.

The strongest man who ever lived. Most have heard the story of him and Delilah. But today I want to back up just a little in his story. And use his life as a picture of temptation.

Judges chapters 13-16 tell the story of Samson.

And I encourage you to read it.

But today I want to focus on a time where he surrendered to temptation.

Let me give you a bit of back story. Samson was chosen by God to serve as Judge. He began this duty at the age of 20 years old. He fought hard for and protected his people. But he had a weakness. I know most of you are thinking hair. God told his parents to never cut his hair and that he would lose his power if he did. But the weakness Samson suffered from was women. He had always been tempted by bad girls. In this story from today 20 years had passed since he became the Judge of Israel. And he –listen-

This is a key. He decided to go to Gaza to be with a prostitute.

Judges 16:1 says -

“One day Samson went to the Philistine town of Gaza and spent the night with a prostitute.”

Key in on that word that I used –decided- God did not tempt him. And Satan only used what was already inside of Samson. Samson made a choice to go.

I did a little bit of research on this subject.

Gaza was 25 miles from the place Samson lived in a town named Zorah. 25 miles. Remember in those days the most common form of transportation was walking. And 25 miles is quite a hike.

I looked up the math on this. The average man's step is 2-2.5 feet which means there are approximately 2000 steps in a mile. Over 25 miles that equals about 50,000 steps. So Samson put one foot in front of the other 50,000 times surrendering to his temptation, his desire.

Which means he had 50,000 chances to turn around and not sin. Not surrender to temptation. But he chose to take each step. He had an out. He literally could have turned back anytime. But he did not. The rest of the story of Samson is a sermon for another day.

But I will tell you. This surrender to temptation caused his life to quickly unravel. The wheels fell off and his life fell apart. His choice affected the rest of his life. It did not have to but it did. Due to his surrender to the temptations that existed inside of him.

Flip over to 1st Corinthians chapter 10 with me.

Verses 12-13

¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. ¹³ 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.

This is where the commonly misused, misquoted, "God won't put more on you than you can handle" saying comes from. Notice it says that we will all be tempted. But He will not allow you to be tempted more than you can stand or withstand. And that he will show you a way out.

Samson had 50,000 chances to turn around.

If you will get real and look at your surrender to temptation at the sin in your own life, God gave you a chance to turn around. You chose to surrender.

So knowing that temptation does not come from God.

Knowing that Satan simply uses the temptation within us.

Understanding that we all make mistakes. But that choosing sin is a conscious effort not a mistake.

Admitting that our friends can't make us surrender. Is a good start to learning how to deal with temptation. Admitting that the things that do tempt us come from inside of us is an even better start.

Listen Temptation is not a sin. But surrender always is. We are all tempted. Jesus himself was tempted. But he did not surrender to that temptation.

Let me read for you Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

⁵ Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and *said to Him, "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.'"

⁷ Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

⁸ Again, the devil *took Him to a very high mountain and *showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus *said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" ¹¹ Then the devil *left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.

There are several things we can learn from our Lord about dealing with temptation here. First I want you to notice that the temptation came when Jesus was tired and hungry. This is when we are the most prone to be tempted and surrender to that temptation. When we are at a weak point.

Notice the devil first uses food. I mean Jesus was hungry. He had been fasting for 40 days. The devil says "Just say the word and these rocks can become bread and you can eat."

Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy here-

'Man does not live by bread alone but by every word from the mouth of God" He uses God' sword. One of our only offensive parts of the armor to defend against temptation. This shows us the importance of God's word in our own struggles against the temptations within us.

Next the devil tries to get Jesus to test God. Jump he says and make God show you his power. Satan is telling Jesus to make God give him a sign he even uses scripture out of context to increase the temptation. Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'"

Next Satan offers him power. We know that Jesus is the King and he will one day reign but the bible says that Satan is the ruler of this world for now.

He is offering Jesus Power now. No waiting. Just worship me he says. But Jesus replies

“Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’” So we see that temptations come in many forms.

But as James says, they start within our own hearts. God uses our pasts and our hurts but he never tempts us to do wrong. Satan only uses the ammo we give him.

So how do we overcome the temptations that lure us away?

As we have discussed many times. We need to focus on Christ. We need to trust in God. And take responsibility for your own actions, your own choices, and your own faults.

Use the pressure to develop endurance. Use it to grow stronger. Seek God’s wisdom. Put good stuff in. You can’t pour in filth and expect to pour out righteousness. Quit trying to let the world or your own desires fix your problems. Ask God for his wisdom and then accept and use it.

When you find yourself about to surrender to temptation.

Turn around.

Go back.

Stop.

Look for the exit.

God has provided one/often times more than one.

And Ask Yourself will this bring glory to God?

Ask what would Jesus think about your choice? What would he say?

Would you do what you are about to do in front of your Mom? Or maybe in front of an audience? How about in front of the Lord?

We must be on constant guard. The attacks will come when you are at your weakest.

So use the sword of God’s word to fight off the temptations.

Pray.

Read and memorize scripture.

Let us put it simply, Trust in God. And wait patiently for God’s timing.

Let me leave you with these words from James.

James 1:16-18

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Lets pray. Lord God in Heaven. You alone are Holy. Father I pray that you would lift us up. That in the moments of temptation we would be able to focus on You. Lord in each of our lives we struggle with our own desires, we pray that you would align our desire with your will for us. We love you Lord! We thank you for all that you do in our lives! In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.