

Series: James

Title: The Source of Temptation

Text: James 1:13-14

Time: 10/02/11 (a.m.)

Introduction

1. A man was on a diet and struggling. He had to go downtown and as he started out, he remembered that his route would take him by the doughnut shop. As he got closer, he thought that a cup of coffee would hit the spot. Then he remembered his diet.

That's when he prayed, "Lord, if You want me to stop for a doughnut and coffee, let there be a parking place in front of the shop." He said, "Sure enough, I found a parking place right in front—on my *seventh time* around the block!"

2. "Most people want to be delivered from temptation but would like it to keep in touch"

3. Learning to overcome temptation is critical for living the victorious Christian life.

4. James continues his encouragement to his readers by equipping them to overcome temptation.

1. Recognize Temptation's Source

1. **Tempted** (1:13) is the same Greek word that is translated **trial** (1:2, 12), but clearly it has two different senses. God tests or tries believers' faith, but He does not tempt anyone into sin.

2. God tested:

- Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19).
- God tested Job by allowing Satan to afflict him with all of his trials (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6).
- He tests both the righteous and the wicked, to reveal their respective characters. (Ps. 11:4-7; see also, Exod. 16:4).
- With His people, the purpose of God's tests is to refine our faith like gold or silver (Ps. 66:10-12; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-14).

3. Because of indwelling sin and the existence of Satan, every test may also become a temptation to sin.

2. Don't Blame God

1. Ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin, fallen human nature has been prone to shift the blame for our own evil deeds. When God confronted Adam, he lamely

replied, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." (**Genesis 3:12**)

2. When God confronted Eve, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (**Genesis 3:13**)

3. Both statements are technically true, but they dodge personal responsibility for sin. Adam's answer really blamed God, who gave the woman to Adam. James wants us to see that if we go down that route, we will not overcome temptation, and we impugn the holy character of God.

Proverbs 19:3 The foolishness of man ruins his way, And his heart rages against the LORD.

4. The Bible has numerous examples of shifting the blame for sin. One that is humorous (if sin can be humorous) is when Aaron makes the golden calf. Exodus 32:2-4 reports that he told the people to bring their jewelry. He took it and fashioned it with a tool and made it into the golden calf. But when Moses confronts him, Aaron lamely says "I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf." (**Exodus 32:24**)

5. James emphatically says, "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."
(**James 1:13**)

1 John 1:5 "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

Habakkuk 1:13a "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor."

3. Temptations Come From Us

1. James does not mention here the devil as a source of temptation, although he will do so later (3:15; 4:7). Here he wants us to see that to blame God or circumstances or the devil or others for my sin is to dodge the real source of it.

2. There is no hope for overcoming it unless I acknowledge, "It comes from my own sinful desires." But, conversely, there is hope for victory when I begin to recognize and be on guard against the monster that resides within.

3. *Lust* means *desire*. Sometimes it refers to legitimate desires (Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17), but usually it means *sinful desire*.

4. Sometimes the same basic desire may be either legitimate or sinful, depending on the situation and how we handle it. For example, hunger is a legitimate desire, but if it tempts us to steal to satisfy our hunger, we sin. God created us with the desire for sex, but if we seek to fulfill that desire outside of the commitment of heterosexual marriage, we sin.

5. To overcome temptation, it is important to realize that although the initial thought to sin stems from my sinful flesh, it is not sin unless I pursue it.

6. Sin *always* begins in the mind. No one ever falls into adultery without first entertaining it in his (or her) thought life. If we judge these sinful thoughts the instant they pop into our minds, we will not head down the path toward outwardly sinful behavior.

Romans 13:14 "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

7. If we do entertain such sinful thoughts, sooner or later Satan will present the outward opportunity to sin, and we will fall. But in such cases, the actual sin has been going on mentally for some time.

Conclusion

2 Corinthians 10:5 "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"

We differ from person to person with regard to the things that tempt us. Men differ from women, but also men differ among men, and women among women. Pride leads us to judge those who yield to sins that have little appeal for us: "How could they do such a thing?" But the same pride lets us excuse our "weakness." "That's just the way I am!" Humility says, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).