



Is It A Test Or A Temptation?

Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2
(Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 341–345.

James 1:12–18 (NKJV)

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

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

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

The Mature Person Is Patient In Trials

James 1:12 (NKJV)

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Endure - **ἀπομένω, ὑπομένω** [*hupomeno /hoop·om·en·o/*] v. It is to remain, to tarry behind, abide, and not recede or flee. It is to preserve under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one's faith in Christ by enduring, bearing bravely and calmly all ill-treatments.

The Mature Person Is Patient In Trials

- Sometimes the trials are testings on the outside, and sometimes they are temptations on the inside.
- Trials may be tests sent by God, or they may be temptations sent by Satan and encouraged by our fallen nature.
- It is this second aspect of trials—temptations on the inside—that James dealt with within this section.

- We may ask, “Why did James connect the two? What is the relationship between testings without and temptations within?” Simply this: if we are not careful, the testings on the outside may become temptations on the inside.
- When our circumstances are difficult, we may find ourselves complaining against God, questioning His love, and resisting His will.
- At this point, Satan provides us with an opportunity to escape the difficulty. This opportunity is a temptation.

- God does not want us to yield to temptation, yet neither can He spare us the experience of temptation. We are not God's *sheltered* people; we are God's *scattered* people.
- If we are to mature, we must face testings and temptations. There are three facts that we must consider if we are to overcome temptation.

Consider God's Judgment

(James 1:13–16)

- This is a negative approach, but it is an important one. James said, “Look ahead and see where sin ends—death!” Do not blame God for temptation. He is too holy to be tempted, and He is too loving to tempt others.
- A temptation is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way, out of the will of God. Is it wrong to want to pass an examination? Of course not, but if you cheat to pass it, then you have sinned.

- The temptation to cheat is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing (*passing the examination*) in the wrong way.
- We think of sin as a single act, but God sees it as a process.
- James described this process of sin in four stages.

Desire

(v. 14)

James 1:14 (NKJV)

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own **desires** and enticed.

- ἐπιθυμία [*epithumia* /ep·ee·thoo·mee·ah/] *n f.* It is a desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust.

Desire

(v. 14)

- The word *lust* means any kind of desire and not necessarily sexual passions. The typical desires of life were given to us by God and, of themselves, are not sinful.
- Without these desires, we could not function. Unless we felt hunger and thirst, we would never eat and drink, and we would die.
- Without fatigue, the body would never rest and would eventually wear out.
- Sex is a normal desire; without it, the human race could not continue.

- It is when we want to satisfy these desires in ways outside God's will that we get into trouble.
- Eating is normal; gluttony is a sin.
- Sleep is normal; laziness is sin.

Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV)

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

- Some people try to become “spiritual” by denying these typical desires, or by seeking to suppress them, but this only makes them less than human.

- These fundamental desires of life are the steam in the boiler that makes the machinery go. Turn off the steam, and you have no power. Let the steam go its way, and you have destruction.
- The secret is in *constant control*. These desires must be our servants and not our masters, and this we can do through Jesus Christ.

Deception

(v. 14)

James 1:14 (NKJV)

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Entice - δελεάζω [*deleazo /del-eh-ad-zo/*] *v.* It is to bait or catch by a bait. It is to fool by flatteries, allure, entice, deceive.

Deception

(v. 14)

- James used two illustrations from the world of sports to prove his point. *Drawn away* carries with it the idea of the baiting of a trap, and *enticed* in the original Greek means “to bait a hook.”
- The hunter and the fisherman have to use bait to attract and catch their prey.
- No animal is deliberately going to step into a trap, and no fish will knowingly bite at a naked hook. The idea is to *hide* the trap and the hook.
- Temptation always carries with it some bait that appeals to our natural desires. The bait not only attracts us, but it also hides the fact that yielding to the desire will eventually bring sorrow and possible punishment.

It is the bait that is the exciting thing. *The bait keeps us from seeing the consequences of sin.*

- When Satan tempted Jesus, He always dealt with the temptation based on the Word of God. Three times He said, “It is written.”
- From the human point of view, turning stones into bread to satisfy hunger is a sensible thing to do, but not from God’s point of view.
- When you know the Bible, you can detect the bait and deal with it decisively.
- This is what it means to walk by faith and not by sight.

Disobedience

(v. 15)

James 1:15 (NKJV)

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

- **ἁμαρτία** [*hamartia /ham·ar·tee·ah/*] **n f.** It is to be without or share in wrongdoing. It is to miss the mark, err, be mistaken. It is to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong. It is to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin.

Disobedience

(v. 15)

- We have moved from the *emotions* (desire) and the *intellect* (deception) to the *will*.
- James changed the picture from hunting and fishing to the birth of a baby. Desire conceives a method for taking the bait. The will approves and acts, and the result is sin.
- Whether we feel it or not, we are hooked and trapped. The baby is born and will mature!

This explains why immature Christians easily fall into temptation: they let their feelings make the decisions.

- The more you exercise your will in saying a decisive no to temptation, the more God will take control of your life.

Philippians 2:13 (NKJV)

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Death

(v. 15)

James 1:15 (NKJV)

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

- **Sin** - **θάνατος, ἀθάνατος** [*thanatos* /**than**-at-os/] [n](#) [m](#). It is the death of the body and separation of the soul and the body by which life on earth is ended.
- It implies the idea of future misery in hell and the power of death.

Death

(v. 15)

- It may take years for the sin to mature, but when it does, the result will be death. If we believe God's Word and see this final tragedy, it will encourage us not to yield to temptation.
- God has erected this barrier because He loves us.

Ezekiel 18:23 (NKJV)

Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"

All Men Die Because Of Adam

1 Corinthians 15:21–22 (NKJV)

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

**The person who dies
without Jesus Christ
will experience eternal
death, the lake of fire.**

Revelation 20:11–15 (NKJV)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

**Whenever you are faced with temptation,
get your eyes off the bait and look ahead
to see the consequences of sin: *the
judgment of God.***

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- We can pass all tests with the help of the Holy Spirit.