

## **Stop Blaming the Devil: James 1:12-20**

### **Scriptures for Today:**

*James 1:12-20 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16 Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. 19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

### **Introduction**

We are back in the book of James this morning. This is the 59<sup>th</sup> book of the Bible and it has 5 chapters. You might have noticed that for each of my sermons in the past I usually start by stating how many chapters are in the book. One of the reasons why I do that is because it's very important for us to be memorizing how many chapters are in each book of the Bible.

If I told you to turn to John 22, you should look at me funny because there are only 21 chapters.

Not only should we memorize how many chapters are in each book, but we should also memorize what are the main topics, themes, and events in every single chapter throughout the Bible.

There are 1189 chapters total. If you have an understanding of what's going on in every chapter, then it will help you greatly throughout your life. When you need help, or when someone else needs answers, then you will know exactly where to turn in your Bible.

Some people might say that's too much to memorize. People memorize song lyrics, movies and TV shows, and a lot of other information that is pretty much useless, so why not memorize something that will help you for all eternity.

For example, we are in James chapter 1. Some key themes in this chapter include:  
Enduring trials with patience, resisting temptation, and living out God's Word.

You can memorize those themes, and that will help you later. There's only 260 chapters in the New Testament so that's a good place to start memorizing what's in every chapter.

Last time we looked at James 1 we studied verses 1-11. James, who was the half brother of Jesus Christ, opens this letter by writing to the believers who were scattered abroad. These were people who were facing real trials, real hardships, and real pressure because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Here in the United States, we have very little understanding of what it means to suffer for Jesus Christ. We have been blessed beyond measure to live in a safe country where we can worship God freely without fear of being imprisoned or put to death. But that will change someday. We need to be prepared to endure trials and hardship in this life.

And maybe there are things that you are enduring right now. Maybe you are facing hardship and testing. James gives us a command that goes completely against the way our flesh naturally wants to respond to those trials. He says in verse 2...

**James 1:2** My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Last time we talked about how that word “temptations” can refer to trials, testings, hardships, and afflictions that come into our lives. When those trials come, we are not supposed to get bitter against God. We are not supposed to quit. We’re not supposed to fall apart. We’re supposed to count it all joy because God will use those trials to strengthen our faith and build patience in our lives.

Not everyone here is going through the same exact trials. We might not all have the same struggles financially, physically, or emotionally, but everyone here knows what it’s like to be tempted by sin.

And as we move into the next section, verses 12 – 20, James is going to continue talking about temptation, but now he is talking about temptation as an enticement to sin.

Every one of us knows what it is like to feel that pull toward something we know is wrong. And one of the things that we as sinful human beings love to do when we commit sin is to shift the blame.

We blame our circumstances. We blame our upbringing. We blame other people. We blame stress. We blame pressure. And a lot of times, people like to blame the devil.

We’ve all probably heard someone say, “The devil made me do it.”  
I’m sure some of us have probably said that at some point.

We know the devil is real. He is the ultimate deceiver. He is the tempter. He wants to destroy your life. He is active, he sets traps, he tries to ensnare you, but we need to understand: the devil can tempt you, but he cannot force you to sin.

At some point we have to stop blaming the devil and start taking responsibility for our own choices. That is why the title of the sermon this morning is **“Stop Blaming the Devil.”**

James is going to show us that sin is not something that just happens to us against our will. There is a process. There is a desire. There is a choice. There is a consequence.

Let's look at verses 12 – 20...

## Verse 12

**James 1:12** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

James makes a statement about a man being blessed. Blessed means to be made happy and prosperous. (Not by worldly carnal things.) But by things that come from Heaven. When you are blessed, you are receiving favor from God.

But notice who is being blessed in this verse...*"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation"*  
It doesn't say blessed is the man who has millions of dollars (*when a prosperity preacher has money, mansions, boats, and planes, that's not a blessing from God.*)

It doesn't say blessed is the man that lives a comfortable life. (*If you sit at home, and you don't have to lift a finger, everything is done for you, you don't have to clean up after yourself, if someone else takes care of everything for you because you refuse to work—do not think you are blessed by God because you are comfortable.*)

It says blessed is the man that endureth temptation. Enduring something takes work, it takes strength, it takes a lot of effort and patience.

When someone is tried and tested in their life, and they endure through that trial, God's Word says you will receive a reward for that endurance. That reward is a crown of life.

It's important that you don't mistake this for everlasting life. Everlasting life is a free gift. It's not something that we obtain through endurance. Being saved from hell is not by works of righteousness which we have done. It's not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

If we had to endure and stay faithful to God to receive everlasting life, then that would give us an opportunity to boast before God. That's why God chose the weak, and the lowly, and the poor in spirit of this world, that no flesh should glory in His presence. If we endure anything in this life, it's because of God's grace and his strength that is placed upon us.

The crown of life is a reward that is received when you endure through the trials and temptations of this present life. It's associated with suffering and being faithful.

**Revelation 2:10** Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

So that crown of life is obtained if you stay faithful. If you suffer and endure. And it is promised to them that love the Lord...

**James 1:12** Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, **which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.**

If you love the Lord, you want to deny your flesh and your comfort. The same way that Jesus denied his comfort as a man and was obedient unto death. Even the death of the cross which is one of the worst ways someone can be killed.

It's a small thing for us to suffer for Him in this life, and He rewards us when we do.

### Verse 13

**James 1:13** Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Now James is shifting the temptation from the trials and suffering of this life to being enticed to sin. But he's making it very clear that when someone is tempted to sin or to do evil, God is never the one doing the tempting.

There is one verse in the Bible where God tempted someone...

**Genesis 22:1** And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am.*

Some people will say, "See there is a contradiction in the Bible". That is not a contradiction. God is not tempting Abraham to commit sin.

**Genesis 22:2** And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

God is tempting or trying Abraham's faith. Words have different definitions and meanings. Just like the word repent does not always mean stopping sin. God repents more than anyone in the Bible and God has no sin.

So here James is now referring to enticement to commit sin because he says "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:"

## Verses 14 – 15

**James 1:14-15** But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. **15** Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

James is laying out the order of how things actually work. Because some people most likely had the wrong idea that God was causing them to sin. And people still think that way today...

While out soul winning, I've heard people say things like, *"If God knew we would sin, then why would he create us", or "God created me to lust so what's wrong with me lusting, God is the one making me to sin."*

In the same way people blame God, people will also blame the devil for making them to sin and commit evil.

Unlike God, the devil does entice us to sin, but he does not make us sin because it is our own choice, and that choice comes from within our sinful flesh...

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his **own** lust, and enticed.

God is not making you sin, the devil is not making you sin...you are tempted when you are drawn away of your **own** lust.

When you believe in Jesus Christ, God places His power upon you to overcome sin. Your soul and spirit has conquered sin and death through faith in Jesus, but your flesh is still corrupted. Your flesh will still be enticed to sin, but now you have the power to overcome the flesh when you walk in the Spirit of God.

No one can ever make you sin. It's always a choice that YOU are making when you are drawn away of your own lust.

**15** Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin:

When you allow your body to concede or cave in to your fleshly desire, sin will abound. It will be brought forth. That also includes sinning in your mind. Proverbs 24:9 says the thought of foolishness is sin. Just because you are not physically doing something, doesn't mean you're not sinning. Jesus said, "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

When you make the choice to entertain the lust that is within, sin is conceived.

and sin, when it is finished, what does it do? It brings forth death.

But when you endure temptation, you receive blessings and a crown of life. The choice should be simple. But a lot of times we keep making the wrong choice.

You might say it's "It's just too hard", "It seems like I'll never be able to stop"

**1 Corinthians 10:13** There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

When you decide to stop feeding you flesh with carnal things, when you stop quenching the Holy Spirit within, and you start feeding your spirit with the good things of God, that's when you will start having more victories over sin in your life.

## Verse 16 - 17

**James 1:16** Do not err, my beloved brethren.

That's a short verse, but it's powerful. James just got done saying don't let any man say he is tempted of God. God did not make you commit sin. The devil didn't make you commit sin. You were drawn away of your own lust and you made the choice to sin.

So when James says do not err, he's saying do not deviate from the truth. Stay on the right path. Maintain the right understanding about sin and about God.

I pray that all of us here will not err from this truth. We need to be accountable for all of the choices that we make. We don't want to blame others and we especially don't want to blame God. Because God does good unto his children.

**James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

God is not the source of evil temptation; he is the source of every good and perfect gift. That means everything that is truly good comes from Him. Life comes from God. Salvation comes from God. Wisdom comes from God. The Holy Spirit. Strength to endure temptation. All the good things come from above.

Down from the Father of lights. Not only is He the creator of physical light, but He is the source of spiritual light and truth.

**1 John 1:5** This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If God is light and has no darkness whatsoever. There is not a single drop of evil. No deception. He is perfectly holy, righteous, and pure. That's why it's impossible for Him to tempt man with evil. It will never happen. It goes on to say *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

In other words, God does not change. He's not unstable, He is not inconsistent. He is not good one day and evil the next. He is always good. Always holy. Always righteous. Without beginning. And without end.

That's completely the opposite of how we are as sinful humans. We are constantly changing. One day we are strong, the next day we are weak. One day we are excited to serve God, the next day our flesh wants to quit.

Thank God He doesn't change. James uses the picture of light and shadow. As the sun moves across the sky, shadows shift throughout the day. In the morning the shadow points in one direction. In the evening it points in the other direction. Shadows are constantly changing, but with God there is no shadow of turning. That's why we can trust Him 100% with everything. He will never fail us.

**Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

God is not going to change His mind when it comes to salvation...

## Verse 18

**James 1:18** Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

This is just awesome to think about. It was of God's own will that He begat us. That's talking about the new birth. Salvation through the word of truth. Salvation through Jesus. It was God's will and desire to save sinners. No one told Him to save sinners. He wanted to do it. We as humans would not have that same desire. We can look at a person and say, "They're not worth saving". God looks at the same person and says "I will save them". That is His will.

James is showing us the difference. Man through his own lust brings forth sin and death. God through His goodness and perfection brings life through His word. He is the only one that can do that.

## Verses 19 – 20

**James 1:19-20** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: **20** For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

The word "wherefore" is connecting these verses to the previous verse. Because God begat us with His Word. Because we are a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. We need to be swift to hear, especially swift to hear God's Word.

Most of the time we are swift to pull out our phones. We are swift to listen to other things. But we're not swift to listen to truth from the Bible.

James says "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

This is the opposite of how many people respond when they are corrected. When the Word of God reproves us, our flesh wants to talk back. We want to justify and make excuses.

**Proverbs 18:13** He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, it is folly and shame unto him.

**Proverbs 13:3** He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

The best thing we can do when God's Word corrects us is stop talking. Stop explaining. Stop trying to make yourself look better. And just listen. Don't get mad.

When God's Word exposes sin, people do not always respond with humility. Sometimes they respond with wrath. People will get mad at the person who is simply speaking the truth that comes directly from God.

But James says we are to be slow to wrath. That means when the Word of God confronts us, we need to control our spirit. We need to humble ourselves and receive correction instead of reacting in anger. Why? **20** For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

If you have wrath and anger in your life and it's not directed toward sin and evil, then it's not righteous anger. It will only cause problems and destruction. Righteous anger is when you have wrath toward evil things. When you have wrath toward the things that God hates.

Most of the time our anger is not righteous. It's usually tied to pride, selfishness, impatience, and bitterness.

**Ephesians 4:26-27** Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: **27** Neither give place to the devil.

In James 1:12–20, James shows us that the man who endures temptation is blessed because God sees his faithfulness and promises reward to them that love Him. But when we give in to sin, we cannot blame God, and we cannot simply blame the devil. Temptation becomes sin when we are drawn away by our own lust. Lust brings forth sin, and sin brings forth death. James warns us not to be deceived: God is not the source of evil. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift. He begat us with the word of truth, and because His Word gave us life, we must respond to it with humility—being swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. The wrath of man will not produce the righteousness of God.

## Application

### 1. Take responsibility for your own sin.

James explains that we are tempted when we are drawn away of our own lust. It's our choice to commit sin. The devil didn't make you do it. We need to humble ourselves and admit that we are the problem. God resists the proud, but He gives grace unto the humble.

### 2. Stop feeding the lust that is drawing you away.

One of the reasons why we continue to commit particular sins in our life is because we keep feeding the lust of our flesh instead of cutting it off. Stop feeding your eyes, ears.

### 3. Respond to God's Word with humility instead of excuses.

Be swift to hear God's Word. Be slow to speak. Be slow to wrath. Accept correction from God.

So the truth is simple: the devil may tempt us, but he cannot force us to sin. We must stop making excuses, take responsibility before God, and receive His Word and allow it to change us. Let's Pray