

Men to Men Ministry
Lesson TWO of Ya'akov
Trials and Temptation

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James 1:2-8, 12-15

2) Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials,

3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

12) Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once 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 being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin;

15) and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Trials and temptations might seem like close cousins, but they're actually more like distant relatives who occasionally show up at family gatherings. But there is a distinction between them. Both start the same as an event, circumstance or occasion where there is an unexpected swerve in our lives.

In verse 2 the KJV uses the word Temptation, the NASB uses the word trial. This word in Greek is peirasmós. Thayer would define this word as:

1. an experiment, attempt, trial, proving
2. the trial of man's fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy
3. an enticement to sin, temptation, whether arising from the desires or from the outward circumstances.

Therefore it may be either trial or temptation. But the sense in this case I would surmise what James meant in this case is Trial. We see an additional word In Verse 3 that could well

shape the use of peirasmós in Verse 2. James uses the word to describe the word in Verse 2 as dokímion which means a proving that by which something is tried or proved, a test

Example:

You are driving along without a care in the world. The radio is playing the best of Christian music, there is an internal desire to be safe and to get to someplace without issue. The scenery on both sides of the throughfare seem both constant and showing no signs of trouble. You have a sense of tranquility and contentment in your heart. You are the master of the road. Both hands are on the wheel and you glance occasionally at the speedometer. There are four lanes to choose from and because of your own sense of moderation in all things you have chosen the second from the right. You try to keep the appropriate distance between your chariot of comfort and the vehicle in front. You are not driving above the speed limit by much, but going with the flow of traffic. Then you hear a loud bang and your car seems to have a life of its own. In an instant you know that the air in one of your tires has blown out. You quickly assess the situation. The steering wheel seems to jerk from one side to the other, “it must be a front tire,” you think. You check traffic and try and find a safe way to pull over. Panic starts to set in as the cars around you seem not to notice your situation. “I have to get over.” Turn signals don’t seem slow the traffic on your left. In your distress there is little thought of God’s provision other than “I hope I don’t die.”

In our story, is this roadway emergency a trial or a temptation?

Trials vs Temptation

First, we must come to a logical understanding between the two. Every happenstance or problem has two components: source and the purpose.

Source:

Trials are often seen as challenges or tests allowed by God to strengthen and grow our faith. They come from external circumstances beyond our control, such as illness, loss, or other hardships.

Temptations, on the other hand, originate from within us or from external sources like the devil. They are designed to entice us into sin and are based on our own desires and weaknesses.

Purpose:

Trials aim to develop perseverance, maturity, and a deeper reliance on God. They are meant to be overcome and can lead to spiritual growth and blessings.

Temptations are intended to lead us into sin and ultimately to spiritual harm. The goal of temptation is to cause us to fail and stray from our faith.

An explosive tire on the freeway in itself is neither a trial nor a temptation. They are amoral to our spiritual lives. It may be a threat to our body, but to our soul or our spirit a flat tire is neither right or wrong.

Question on Trials

Does God cause trials?

There is a divergence in theology which has been debated, examined, explored, separated, and simply ignored based upon this simple question.

It has divided the Christian faith into two camps. Each would say the **purpose** and **source** are the same for trials. These two camps are: Absolute Sovereignty and Free Will.

1. *Absolute sovereignty.* God can and does control all things including trials. This perspective holds that nothing happens outside of God's dictated and perfect will. Even difficult situations are there to be used for His glory and our ultimate good. In this view our story of a flat tire on the freeway was part of God's perfect directed will which results in a trial of your faith.
2. *Free will.* God does not directly cause trials. He allows them to happen. This view suggests that trials are a part of God's overall plan to refine and strengthen our faith. They would point out in the story of JOB, that God permitted Satan to test JOB's faith through severe trials, but God did not directly cause JOB's suffering. Here the flat tire was not caused by God, but a random event that resulted in a trial of your faith.

For me, I do not believe that God directly and by his intended will cause the tire to go flat at the worst time. But further that this terrible circumstance can cause me to a place of growth in my spiritual life.

I further believe whether you believe in absolute sovereignty or freewill in the matter of trials they both end up as a test of the faith of the believer.

God uses trials to test our faith. James puts it succinctly: "Count it all joy when you face trials of various kinds, because they test your faith and produce steadfastness" (James 1:2-3). So flat tires, job loss, sickness, pain in the neck neighbors, and the lot are places for growth. Trials are like divine gym sessions—they build our spiritual muscles.

Question on Temptation

If a trial is a test of our faith, what is a temptation?

Temptations are more personal. A temptation in our flat tire scenario would be to get angry at all the other cars. A temptation would bring to mind to screaming at the top of your lungs a colorful metaphor. A temptation would stand on the brakes and let the guy behind you to experience a trial. If he rear-ends me that is his trial. Temptations are internal struggles. They're like that little devil on your shoulder whispering, "Psst, go ahead, take that extra cookie. No one's watching." Temptations are internal struggles. Temptations are when our inner sense of judgment is involved. When our ethics and morals are inserted in the trial.

Temptation not instinctual response of alarm but a conscious relinquishment of our decision making to either God's will or to our own self-will.

Temptations arise from our individual weaknesses. What tempts me might not tempt you. James nails it again: “**Each person is tempted when lured and enticed by their own desires**” (James 1:14). So, it’s like a customized battle—your kryptonite versus your neighbor’s kryptonite.

Trials: God’s way of testing our faith, like a divine exam. Trials are the events
Temptations: Our personal battles, where desires dance with danger. Temptation is about our reaction.

‘Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him (James chapter 1, verse 12).’

In case you were unaware, the Christian life is not problem-free. We are not immune to the trials and tribulations of life. On the contrary, we are guaranteed throughout the Bible that we will indeed face trials throughout our lives.

Trials may present themselves in various forms. For some, it might be enduring challenging situations outside of their sphere of influence. Or perhaps, it might be suffering from disappointed expectations or having your character personally challenged. Furthermore, for some Christians trials will include being persecuted for their faith.

Maybe, you have already fought trials of many kinds and wear them as well-earned battle scars. Or perhaps, for some, their wounds still bleed as they desperately seek healing. Whether you have or have not yet faced trials, we are all called to be prepared for trials that will come.

Question on JOY

How can we have Joy in the middle of trial?

James simply encourages us to consider it, keep the possibility open, to add up all the factors in the middle of our trials and respond with a heart language of joy.

Remember last week we talked about the difference between two motives of behavior: Ethics and Morals. Simply stated again Ethics is about head knowledge of commands, requirements, codes, societies expectations. Ethics is about logic and expectations. Ethics is about the head. On the other hand, Morals is about heartfelt, internal reactions. Morals is about that inner voice reminding you of spiritual matters. Morals are a heart matter.

Therefore, when James writes in Chapter 1:2 - “**Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials**”, he is saying trials are never meant to tear you down. They are a methodology for you to endure in God’s strength by faith and be found righteous or to be a temptation that would bring you down. Every trial should be seen through God’s eyes and accepted as a reason for JOY.

Every trial that we face is God-approved, tailored for our spiritual growth and maturity. Interestingly, in James chapter 1, verse 2-4, it is written that we are to consider it

pure joy when we face trials because the testing of our faith produces perseverance. Furthermore, this perseverance will work within our lives to mature and complete us.

Through perseverance, these tailor-made trials will result in us developing a resilient faith. A steadfast faith, which can endure our earthly journey and will result in us receiving eternal life.

Destructive temptations

'When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James chapter 1, verses 13-15).'

As Christians, we believe that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. However, we continuously wrestle with doing what we know to be right. In essence, we constantly battle two enemies – Satan and ourselves. God does not tempt us, we are tempted by our own evil desires. In Ephesians chapter 4, verse 22, **"in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of defeat"**, we are warned to disregard our old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires. Our desires, within themselves, start off as innocent.

Being hungry is not a sin, yet gluttony is. Being wealthy is not a sin, yet greed is. Sexual desire is not a sin, yet lust is. Hence, it is the luring of these desires which gives birth to sin. Moreover, over time, without repentance and accepting the gift of salvation, these sins will result in death.

The conception of sin

The difference between trials and temptations is clearly described in James chapter 1, verses 12-15. Perseverance through trials produces a steadfast faith and results in eternal life. On the contrary, when we are tempted by our own desires this produces sin and sin leads to death.

Example

In Matthew chapter 4, verses 1-11 Jesus is tested in the wilderness. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty night Jesus was hungry. The devil tempted Jesus, attempting to use Jesus' human desire for food to lead Him to sin.

However, the line where sin is conceived was not crossed with Jesus. Although Jesus experienced the desire for the food, He chose perseverance and trusted God throughout the trial. Hence, Jesus rebuked the devil did not cave into temptation.

There seems to be an intermediate step between sin and crowns. There is an explicit process here.

There is first an assumption that this section is to and about those who are saved. The first step is salvation. The place where we have acknowledged our sin, belief in God's

ability to forgive us our sins, asking for mercy, turning away from our old life and following Jesus as our hope and our life.

Secondly, we will encounter trials. Those circumstances of life that test our resolve, which seem to make us weak. The trials themselves are neither bad or good, they just happen. Some are life threatening, others may be very small and seemingly insignificant, i.e. you are in a car crash and thrown from the car with multiple injuries or someone left a single Oreo cookie on the counter.

Consequently how we react to this trial is a place where either morality or ethics come into the process. Either our head asks us if there is a prescribed law or command, or code that would restrain you, or your heart reveals to us our spiritual character. The split in the result of death or crown is based upon our choice of the voice of our bodies or the voice of the spirit.

It is a decision we all make. Life is not easy. Most of the time circumstances are not of our making. Sometimes they are because of our past. Something we do we will carry scars that will never go away this side of heaven. But any individual trial is a decision point, a decision as to who will rule your life.

1. **SIN** – James 1:14 “**but each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust, birth to sin, and when sin has accomplished, it brings forth death.**” Same trial, same circumstance, same situation but your thought process can be led by our own wants. Then and only then will the trial becomes temptation. When self gets in the way of the Spirit.
 - a. Sin results when we have allowed our bodies want or desire to overcome our spiritual will it is classified as temptation.
 - b. The second part of the sinful process is to let it happen. A willful rebellion to either expressed will of God (Ethics) or our spiritual will (Morals) there is a birth of a sin.
 - c. If this sin is not forgiven by confession, and faith believing it will lead to the ultimate end of death.
2. **STRENGTH to ENDURE** - There is a second outcome from this trial set before us. This outcome is governed by our reaction to the circumstance. It is still an act of will. This act of the will is a response to the trial no matter how large or small. Our response may well be processed differently. There is a huge difference what order we process first.
 - a. The trail is encountered we can respond to it using our head and then our heart.
 - i. You can check all the boxes in the command list and make a decision saying there is no explicit prohibition therefore it becomes an ethical decision. There is an explicit prohibition therefore we stop there.
 - ii. You can go to the next step to consult with your heart, your spirit and determine what is good and not so good as a moral decision.

- iii. As long as there is a priority of head over heart. There are always loop holes. We can well not break any law but take the last cookie even if your child wanted it.
- b. What James here was saying that, yes we have laws, commands, rules, which may be important, but what really matters most is the heart.
 - i. When only the ethical mind is in charge, we become like the pharisees. We measure and rightly divide the word of truth looking for loopholes and excuses to govern our actions.
 - ii. When the spiritual, heartfelt, sometimes emotional will is listened to then the decision becomes a moral decision as to **what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.** Romans 12:2.
- c. Further when we put the spiritual before the bodie's wants and lusts there are results.
 - i. The first result is perseverance. We can get through it no matter what the trial may be.
 - ii. Second result is being approved by God. Our endurance receives a stamp of approval. We pass. We learn that God is still able to help. We have a God we can call upon and listen to. I am not conformed to this world but transformed by the renewal of mind (to listen to the heart) *Paraphrase.*
 - iii. When we have persevered, when we have put our spiritual lives first, when we have received the stamp of approval we will receive a reward. That reward is a symbolic crown of life. James 1:12 **"Blessed is a man who preservers under trial; for one he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**
 - iv. And that is why we can have joy in our trials. James 1:2 **Consider it all joy when we encounter various trials.**

Blessedness comes through trial. It would be great if once we become believers that all in life is now smooth as my bald head. But it is not so. Trials come to everyone. It rains on the just and the unjust. Therefore, we cannot ever say trials in our lives are a punishment for sin. If you have confessed your sin and God has forgiven you of that sin. It is gone, no punishment allowed. That is why James stated flatly in James 1:13 **"Let no one say when he is tempted he is tempted by God" For God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone."**

A note must be made here in every instance of the word trial, temptation, and test has the same Greek root word. Hence every instance is to be determined by its context. Words used, peirasmois, peirasomenos, peirazomai, peirazei, apeirastos, apierazetai.

In a nutshell the process is this: 1. Your encounter a problem, 2. You ask of God for help, 3. Everything is fixed NOPE. The third step requires you to wait for the solution.

Sometimes that solution is a direction, “I am feeling unwell, direction a. Pray, b. go to the doctor, c. tell the elders and they pray. The third step if you loose your job, the solution is to a. pray, b. go look for a job, c. ask your brothers to pray. But be well assured in many situations the solution will not come right away.

Be patient, our prayers are always answered, but not always on the exact day we would like it to be.

Conclusion

Trials challenge you. They put pressure on you, they demand that you either put up or shut up in your claim to follow Jesus. To me this week’s scripture we have two choices. You can turn to God for help, trusting Him to get your through the trial by doing what he wants you to do and enduring the trial by His grace and strength. OR you can try to fix the problem yourself in your own strength without God’s help, without God’s involvement, and make a bigger mess that you had before. Any solution that does not include God is a wrong solution. We may run away but if you distance yourself from the trial it follows you. If you try to make it a head thing it will stay there and you will try to look for a loophole to dodge it. Just giving in to the trial, it grows with every second and never goes away.

What happens when we do the right thing and do the right thing and turn to God during our trial? We go through a process that strengthens and purifies. I Peter 1:6,7, **“In this YOU greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

Problems have a way of removing things in your life you depend on or find comfort in other than the Lord. Sometimes, those can be good things. But even good things can become bad if they are more important to us than our relationship to Jesus.

When trials come they are not there to make you sad or discouraged or even have feelings of being deprived. Trials are to test our faith. It produces endurance.

TRIALS BRING ENDURANCE AND JOY

