

Men to Men Ministry
Lesson Four in the Letter of James
How to overcome sin

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16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters.

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

18 In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

Review from last week

We finished up last week looking at the need for wisdom. Wisdom to endure, make perfect and leads to a crown of life. It is also wisdom to bring us back from the edge of destruction from sin. That terrible stain upon the creation. The inevitable result of our choices. As it says in Romans “All have sinned and fallen short of the God’s glorious ideal”. But here James provides a path to becoming what God wants us to be. In this chapter in James, we have tremendous highs:

- 1) The testing of our faith is for a reason and that reason is endurance.
- 2) This endurance changes us into a more and more perfect and complete image of Gods design
- 3) There is a promise of wisdom for the asking.
- 4) God never changes in His goodness
- 5) Those who persevere can be approved
- 6) Those who are approved will receive a crown of life.

But we also find the possibility of terrible lows:

- 1) We can have doubts the rack the soul
- 2) These doubts can and do change expectations of deliverance.
- 3) The rich can be overcome by their pride
- 4) The poor can be overcome by their sense of unworthiness.
- 5) No matter where we are in our relationship with God we will go through trials.
- 6) Trials can lead to temptation.
- 7) Temptation can lead to death.

It is this last one that should scare you. Sin kills the spirit, Sin kills the soul, Sin kill the body.

Any Christian should be diligently seeking a remedy. Not a remedy for our sin nature, that is a part of creation, a curse set upon us by our lineage but from the consequences of that nature, our bent to sin. We all should be seeking the strength to endure.

ARE BELIEVERS TEMPTED?

- Sin does not come from God.
- Temptation does not come from God
- Spiritual death does not come from God
- Can we simply blame the Devil? It is his chosen profession to be a deceiver of all. Deceiver of the Jews. Deceiver of Messianic Jews. Deceiver of Christians. Deceiver of the saved. Deceiver of the unsaved. Deceiver of the devout. Deceiver of the new Christian. Deceiver of the Senior Saint. Deceiver of Pastors. Deceiver of teachers. Deceiver of students.

The Process of Sin – James 1:14,15

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.

- 1) Starts with a Trial. Happens to everyone. They are not from God. They are situations which require either a moral or ethical response. A trial always takes conscious thought. It takes a place and we take a moment and think about it and make a ethical or moral response.
- 2) Secondly, the consequence of trials is a required response, even if it is only in the mind it can become a deception of temptation:
 - It may be caused by our own wants, desires, needs.
 - Or it may be the devil taking the opportunity to change your thinking. There is no getting around the idea of the devil, or Satan. He is alive and well and living all around us. Looking at the terribleness of man's inhumanity to man is reason enough to see this fallen angel at work.
- 3) When we are encouraged, dragged, invited, we become enticed. "Seems OK so far!"
- 4) With that ethical or moral decision has been entertained long enough it gives birth to sin. Sin is conceived, like an embryo within our life. It is life. It finally becomes SIN. It is born or given action.
- 5) Ultimately it kills you.

But there is hope. There is an antidote. Sin can be overcome. No matter what stage you are in.

This brings us to the passage for tonight. HOW TO OVERCOME SIN.

 16 **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brothers and sisters.

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

18 In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

The portion of James' letter, while seemingly at first read a little out of context. As we have seen the in session one about trials we can overcome. And in session two we discovered the terrible penalty when we do not endure. That section was about temptation and ultimate death. Gloom, despair, excessive misery. Keeping this idea of starting in trial, turning to temptation, becoming sin and resulting in death, James immediately tells us good stuff, perfect stuff that comes from the Father. DO NOT BE DECIEVED. All consequences of temptation, sin and death CAN be overcome. We can be victors even in trials and temptation.

HOW TO OVERCOME SIN.

Just like there is a process that moves from trials to temptation to death, there is a solution, a method to overcome. James now moves to the solution to sin. A solution for every temptation for all people, for all stages of life, for all Christians. There is a path back to the crown of life.

Do not be deceived.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers and sisters.

Our selection James 1:16-18 starts with a warning. A warning to the Jewish Church and to all that are in the church because we are all susceptible. Deception stands at the same door we opened for Jesus come into and forgive us.

People are deceived every day. Whether it is spam telephone calls or when we are on the internet deception what is called click bait: a interesting idea were a click sends us into a never ending barrage of spam. We can be deceived by politicians promising all the best things and producing little but more taxes. We see advertisements shouting they are the greatest but are not. The latest pill to fix everything from lumbago to near sightedness. There are medications to eliminate pain and state you need thousands of extracts of fruit and vegetables to stop our aging. Insurance companies claiming you will have a terrible time with great calamity.

Each of these deceivers scream at you, "Look at me I am what you need to be." "Look at all the kingdoms in the world and tell me I can be the ruler of them all." "Look at a stone and tell me it can be a loaf of bread."

My beloved brothers and sisters

James writing to the church. James was writing to the members of the church that were forgiven, redeemed and justified before God. They were people whom James loved. They were the people that needed to know there was a possibility to be deceived. James wanted them to know this basic truth. Just because you are saved and loved it does not

mean you are impervious to deception. You can be led astray. You will encounter in all your trials a decision point where you will be subject to deception.

Please note there as James points out this truth. There must be a high risk of this happening. There must be a revealed history in the very church to which he was writing that needed this admonition. James is warning them and you that there is a susceptibility to this happening. Personally I will tell you that no matter your spiritual strength, your ability to endure, your status of being a living sacrifice to God, there is a good probability some will “take the bait” and accept a untruth, a lie.

James is warning you. I am warning you. This can happen to you. Every trial is accompanied by the possibility of deception. A real possibility that those who are loved and a part of the church can be detoured.

Two possibilities

Deception of sin

The **first** possibility starts with the explanation of James about the process of sin.

- (1) the process starts as a trial.
- (2) a moral decision was made not to preserve but to take a easier path.
- (3) the easy path more often than not it finds its root in the body, (SARX).
- (4) that bodily desire drew you in. It enticed you, it seemed to be the easiest and more desirable.
- (5) It gave birth to sin
- (6) that sin ultimately ends in DEATH

This first possibility could logically associated to what James was referring to in the previous section. It could be that deception was injected some place between (1) and (2). This warning included right after the process of sin, could rightly could be saying, “Do not be deceived about the process of sin”. A continuation of the thought just prior. I could have included it in the last lesson.

Nevertheless, every time James uses the praise of “brethren” or “brothers” James is always starting a new thought or idea that must be held separately.

Deception of good

The **second** possibility is that James is associating deception of the believer about the goodness of God, “**Do not be deceived about the goodness of God.**”

It could be either. Deception to which James was warning could be either Goodness or sin. In my studies it seems to be more reasonable it is about the second possibility. The click bait of this section is that the church, the redeemed, the justified, the included were harboring the idea that God is not always good.

This admonition can readily be paired with James 1:13, “**Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted of God”, for God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**”” Like the error of the church to say that it is “God who is tempting me.” Our section for tonight is the second error. God does not tempt and You can be deceived in thinking God is not totally good.

When trials become temptations we are subject to three points of deception.

- 1) The deception that God is the instigator of our temptation. James 1:13.

- 2) The deception that our own abilities and desires to be used in our temptation
James 1:14
- 3) The third deception is that we harbor the thought that all the trials and temptations that come into my life is because God is not always good.

Do not be deceived God was, is, and will ever be GOOD

Fundamentally: Those who are in trails and facing temptation, and dealing with difficulties: WE MUST KNOW THAT GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD. That God is good and every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above and it comes from the father. Trails must be seen as a good gift. – hence joy in verse 2..... **Consider it all joy.**

God is not in the business of bringing death, decay, into the world. God is the only source of true goodness. The deception in verse 16 is saying things that are not so good also come from God. A reminder here: God causes all thing to work together for BAD is simply wrong. Deception is saying all the things we do that could be classified as Good are gifts from God. NEVER BLAME the bad things in your life on God.

Father of lights

There is a play on words. The constant father of all light. Does not dim with the changing of the moon and the stars. God of goodness is constant not changed by clouds or the turning of the earth. The sun does not go down it is still there.

God's generosity is not changeable.

God is always 100%. He never changes because you are experiencing pain. God is 100% percent generous. He is completely good at all times. If God's goodness ever appears to vanish or to vary, the problems not with God it is with our perception. It means we have been DECIEVED.

If you think God is hiding behind some cloud you are being DECIEVED.

God's perfect gift.

Here James gives us the reason for our Moral decision not to be deceived. It is not that God is Good all the time but this goodness provides gifts. God's greatest gift from above was we are also a perfect gift.

Our first gift was in our own creation, you were born, given life a life worth living, a life to be lived for Him. Our second gift was John 3:16 **“For God so loved the world, that he GAVE His only begotten Son.”** Our third gift was our new birth. **“That who ever believes will have everlasting life.”**

If the first birth is a good thing. The second gift is a better thing. The third is the best thing for us. BUT we are susceptible to falling away. The deception that that God planed for our failings after our rebirth. The deception that we could all fall from that good image. So God brings us out of this dance with the devil, or deception waltz by his Word of Truth God

A counter plan to deception is calling us all to the Bible, God's word of truth.

God's worth is exampled in God's word. God's to be born to life in us, he has brought true life into the world a life that is beyond what death and what sin can do

First Fruits among His Creatures.

In the ancient world of James. It was the law that the first fruits were to be sacrificed to the Lord. They were sacred. They were offered in grateful sacrifice to God because they were God's possession. Belonged to HIM

WHEN WE ARE BORN AGAIN BY THE TRUE WORD OF THE GOSPEL, WE BELONG TO GOD, BECOME GOD'S PROPERTY.

Change our desires – need on our part

James was telling us that path to sin starts with a moral decision making which could and over does start with “God is tempting me” or “God is placing me in this bad spot because he wants to trip me up or “That is what I want”.

Sin begins on three deceptions.

- 1) “It is God's fault for making me this way. My wants my desires my needs are a part of God's creation.
- 2) “It is God who started this trial in my life. It is something I cannot handle so therefore God's provision must be bad.
- 3) “God is no adequate for this need. I can handle this myself. I don't need any further wisdom.

To answer all three objections we must first realize that God allows trials to make us better. He works within your moral will to overcome and not to be deceived. We must be well aware of that this process is a very large part of the path to Christian Growth, to perfection of the Christian, the path to the Crown of Life. It is very important to compare this path to Romans 12:1,2 ***I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God I, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.***

Further compare and consider Galatians 5:24 ***Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

1) How do we change our desires?

How do we change our desires? They seem to be thing very thing that is getting us in trouble and on the path to destruction. They seem to be getting stronger the more I try to stuff them down, the more I try to ignore them.

- The first method of change is a large injection of the Word of God. Throughout the Bible there are numerous instances of the Word of God being first to help us on our quest. Psalms 119:11 ***The Word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.*** And we can also look at Matthew 4:3-10. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, ***“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*** Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ***“If you***

are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

- How can the Word of God change our desires? As we read of God’s love, longsuffering and mercy, we desire to serve Him, Psalm 116:12-14 ***What shall I repay to the LORD, For all His benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD; May it be in the presence of all His people!***

As we read of sin and its damnable consequences, we come to hate it! - Psa119:104
From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

So the more we study God’s Word, the less likely we will have the desire to sin. We can overcome the very beginning to overcome sin by “nipping it in the bud”!

But changing our desires takes time; while engaged in the process of changing our desires, what else can we do?

2) Limit our opportunities

When an event or trail comes into our lives and they will come at the time least expected we must limit our opportunities to be tempted.

- Remember, we are tempted only when there is both desire and opportunity. So while we work on changing our desires, we should limit the opportunities to fulfill wrongful desires. This can be done by asking for God’s providential help, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:13 ***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*** And in Matthew26:41 ***Keep watching and praying, so that you do not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.***
- We can work with God in cooperation by purposely avoiding situations that might excite wrongful desires by following the example of David in Psalm 101:3-4 ***I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil.*** And the example of Job - Job 31:1 ***I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I look at a virgin?***
- We can avoid those whose evil behavior encourages us to sin with them. We are very susceptible to those we live with, those who we have fun with and those who we work with. David sets a good example - Psa 101:6-7 ***My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; the one whose walk is blameless will minister to me. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.*** Paul also adds his warning in Colossians 15:33

3) There must be place for the Holy Spirit to do His work

Paul also adds his warning - 1 Co 15:33 **But we will unlikely remove every desire and opportunity to sin in this life, what then?** Here Paul is saying there is an exercise self-control. It must be remembered it only becomes sin when we yield to action in fulfilling our sinful desires. If we can control ourselves so as to not yield, then we can overcome sin! But how does the Christian exercise self-control?

- Self-control is but one aspect of the “fruit of the Spirit” – Galatians 5:22-23 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.** The fruit here as stated is a part of the Spirit of God dwelling in you. When we become Christians, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives – Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, **“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** and in Acts 5:32, **And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”**
- The Spirit is God’s instrumental agent by which He imparts strength to us – Ephesians 3:16 **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self,**. And in Romans 8:12-13 **Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**
- As Paul said: **“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”** In Philippians 4:13. It is through faith in God’s Word that the Christian believes that he has this divine help - Ephesians 3:20 **Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.**

It is certainly proper to pray for strength in the Holy Spirit but equally important, to act upon it, trusting that you are not alone as you try to do God’s will. As an exercise commercial once said: Just do it! We have no excuse for yielding to temp. The Christian, then, has no excuse for yielding to temptation - 1 Corinthians 10:13 **No temptation[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted[b] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,[c] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**

But what I fail?

But there may be times when we don’t take advantage of the strength God provides through His Spirit, and we sin; what then?

- 1) Obtain forgiveness
 - a) Remember that sin is victorious when it results in punishment
 - b) But if we obtain forgiveness through the blood of Christ, we can avoid that punishment and thereby still overcome sin! - 1 Jn 2:1-2
 - c) Yes, Christ is truly the “propitiation” for our sins!

- d) By His blood, we were forgiven of past sins when united with Him in baptism - Acts 2:38; 22:16; Re 1:5
- e) By His blood, we can be forgiven of present sins when we repent, pray, and confess our sins to God - Ac 8:22; 1 Jn 1:9
- f) At any time the Christian can overcome sins that were committed, by repenting and confessing them to God!

CONCLUSION

- 1) Indeed, we can overcome sin by stopping its development at any one of the four stages leading to the final punishment!
- 2) If you noticed carefully, you should have seen that at each of the four points in the development of sin, God is able and willing to help us overcome sin...!
 - a. God helps us to control our desires by providing His Word to renew our minds
 - b. God helps us to limit the opportunities through His Providence as we pray for such
 - c. God helps us to exercise self-control over our actions through His Spirit strengthening the inner man
 - d. God helps us to obtain forgiveness through the blood of His Son as we repent and pray
- 3) So how could anyone say that God would tempt us to sin...?
 - a. Certainly He is the giver of every good and perfect gift! - Ja 1:17
 - b. Even as Paul wrote, in 2 Th 3:3; 1 Co 10:13
- 4) Have you taken advantage of God's way of escape for the sins you have committed?
 - a. If not, why not do so by obeying the gospel, the Word of Truth, and become one of the "first fruits of His creatures"

YOU CAN BE DECIEVED.
GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD
GOD PROVIDES YOU A WAY