

Jam 1:16,18 **TEMPTATION and EVERY GOOD GIFT**

This is the time of year when we give gifts to almost all our friends. The **subject of gifts** is on everyone's minds. I found it **amazing** that this passage in God's Word which talks of gifts, is mentioned in the **context** of **temptation** – a subject which is **also** very **relevant** for this time of year! I am sure you agree!?

In fact, James warns us “*Do not be **deceived**” as if it was **likely** that we **could** be deceived regarding temptation and its nature. Many people at this time of the year **make excuses** for their extreme and sinful **behaviour!** ‘You know how it is, it was the office party, I had one or two drinks, and.....’! An **excuse!** Just like Adam and Eve, they make an excuse! Paul, of course, makes clear that even the heathen are “*without excuse*” regarding their sinful ways. And here, James **knocks on the head** any idea that we are **not responsible** for our conduct!*

We might make excuses, and point to our inability to control our passions, but these excuses are not valid.

Jay Adams tells of a man who stored up oily rags in the basement of his house just under the gas boiler! He was **warned** that if it caught fire (as was likely) there would be an **uncontrollable** fire. He kept storing his rags – and there **was** a fire which he could **not control!** Because he did his **best** to control the fire, but was **unable** to control it, he **maintained** he was **not responsible** for the damage done! But the **insurance company** said that for years he had been had been laying the **foundations** for a serious fire, and despite their warnings, he continued to **provide fuel**, which if ever ignited, would be uncontrollable! **APP** There is a **spiritual application** – how many of **us** are laying the foundations and providing fuel, which if ignited by God's anger will result in **eternal** ruin? People, are **heaping** up for **themselves** trouble, despite many warnings – spiritually speaking, they are heading for **eternal** trouble!

APP And it is our **own fault** despite our inability to prevent the **consequences** of our sins! That is what James is saying here. He says it is not God's fault when we fall into temptation, but rather the problem lies in our **own hearts**! *“Let **no** one say when he is **tempted** ‘I am being tempted by God’...for God... Himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is **lured** and **enticed** by **his own desire**”*[13] It is what is in our own **hearts** that causes temptation to be successful. Satan, or his agents, **addresses** that **corrupt aspect** of our natures which relates and corresponds to the temptation! Because we are too weak to fight the **consequences** of our conduct, does **not** **absolve** our responsibility! We are *“without excuse”*!

I am sure when James wrote this passage, he had Adam/Eve in mind. Because it is the **first temptation**! And there is this **very important** point: The first temptation was the **occasion** of the **first Xmas gift**! Yes, the first **Xmas** gift! Xmas started in the Eden just **immediately** after the Fall through **temptation**!! God was not long in coming to our rescue and providing mankind with the first and **greatest** Gift of **all time**. Jesus Christ!

Do you know that Jesus Christ would never have walked on this earth if it was not for the **tragedy** of **sin**! If it was not for the Fall into **temptation**! It was **sin** that caused the **incarnation** – there would have been **no reason** for Jesus to come! He would have remained in glory surrounded by the adoration of angels, delighting in the glories of heaven! *“I was **daily** His **delight**, **rejoicing** before Him **always**, **rejoicing** in His inhabited **world** and **delighting** in the children of men”*[Pro 8:30]

This greatest of all Gifts was made in a **promise**, yes **more** than a promise, it was a **guarantee** of deliverance/redemption from the **consequences** of falling into temptation. That very thing which we are **unable** to prevent. God's judgment on our sin! In Eden, God promised the Serpent: *“Because you have done this...I will **put enmity** between you and between your*

*offspring and her offspring; **He** bruise your **head**, and you shall bruise His heel”*[Gen 3:15] That is the **embryonic** form of what JC was to do at **Calvary** – conquer Satan, sin, death, hell! Jesus would bruise/crush Satan’s head (not kill him – for he is a soul) but render him **defeated**. Serpent’s head is where all the power is. Satan would **hurt** Jesus but just his **foot**!

Do you know that every **sadness, badness, grief, sorrow** is as a result of the Fall and sin? It all comes from the wickedness of man’s heart. (And what wickedness we are reading of in the press these days)! We cannot blame God for the troubles of the world – they come from the consequences of our sin! God told us this would happen if we disobeyed Him.

And what James, and the whole of Scripture is telling us, is that God is the **Sole Giver** of every good thing! *“every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights”*[17]! Ie, all the trouble in the world is from man’s folly, all the goodness in the world is from God! James has been talking of the **source** of all **evil** - **man’s** heart. And the **source** of all **good** - **God’s** heart!

Xmastime is a **reminder** of the **origin** of good things, of gifts! **All** good things are in and from Jesus Christ! *“every good and every perfect gift is from above”*. It is God who **moves** people to give! Every good thought in man has been put there by God. He causes us to remember and to think good thoughts. **Ill**. Have you ever been to **Law Hill** at night and seen all the lights of this city? Spread over the whole area - all kinds of lights, dim, bright and all colours. They all come from **one parent power source**! Kill off that power source and all the lights go out! Remember New York city when the electrical grid was shut down. The whole city was without electricity! That’s the way it is with goodness in this world. It **all** comes from God **above**! He is the **root** of all that is good and wholesome and pure.

In [3:17] James says that “*bitter jealousy*” and “*selfish ambition...this is not the wisdom that comes down from **above**, but is earthly, **unspiritual**, demonic. For where **jealousy** and **selfish ambition** exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from **above** is first **pure**, then **peaceable**, **gentle**, open to reason, **full of mercy** and **good fruits**, impartial and sincere”[3:17] James shows the **contrast** between what is evil, unspiritual, demonic, eg, jealousy, selfish ambition, and what is wholesome and pure and peaceable and full of mercy, impartiality, and **good fruits**, is from **above**!*

Paul has told us **what good fruit is**: “*love, joy peace, gentleness, kindness*” etc. So, all the kindness in the world is from above from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It all began just after the Fall – in the promise of the coming of JC!

And it has been ‘**coming**’ ever since. As that promise in Eden **unfolded** through God’s prophets and the Word of God, mankind has been benefitting from **grace** of God. History **testifies** that where the **gospel** has come to a land, goodness has escalated. Fact! The principles of the gospel, the Word of God, the Bible has changed societies all over the world in all cultures. Despite the awful condition of the world and the sadness around us, things **are actually much better** than they were 100s of years ago! Just look at Charles Dickens DVDs! The **squalor** and **deprivation** and **standard** of living!

“*Do not be **deceived***” also refers to **what is** the Best Gift? Many people think it is **power** to obtain whatever we want! Most think this is **money**! But what **we** want is not the **best** for us! **Unless** JC and His Holy Spirit has **enlightened** us, we will continue to **seek** everything **except** the kingdom of God! “*Seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness and **all** these things will be **added** to you*”[Mat 6:33] The best gift you could have this Xmas is Jesus Christ Himself!