

I. Introduction.

II. The source of temptation – When tempted, don't blame God. v. 13-14

- A. Why would someone say that God is tempting him?**
1. Every man is right in his own eyes. Pr. 16:2 19:3
 2. The first man used this excuse. Gen. 3:12
 3. Some claim that God created them to be a certain way (i.e. an alcoholic, an angry person, a person with strong sexual drives, lazy, etc.).
 4. Some charge that God put them into circumstances which tempted them more than they could bear.
 5. Some blame God because He allows the trials in their lives. Rom. 8:28 Eph. 1:11
- B. God is good! He is not temptable nor does He tempt anyone. Hab. 1:13**
1. Satan will tempt you to doubt God's goodness. Gen. 3:5 II Co. 2:11
 2. Again James appeals to the character of God. 1:5,17
 3. Because God is good, He is not attracted to evil.
 4. Nor does God tempt others to evil.
 5. If God is not temptable, then in what sense was Jesus tempted? Mt. 4:1ff
 6. Jesus was tempted to the greatest possible degree, without sinning, and He comes to the aid of those who are tempted. Heb. 2:17-18 4:15-16 7:26 Mt. 6:13
- C. What about the times when God is said to test His people? Deut. 8:2 Ps. 26:2 Judg. 2:22 II Chron. 32:31 Ex. 16:4 Mt. 4:1**
1. The same Greek word is used of God testing Abraham. Heb. 11:17 Gen. 22:1ff
 2. The exact meaning of many biblical words is understood by context.
 3. The difference is intent. 1:2-4,12
 - a. Satan tempts us, seeking to lure us to do evil. Mt. 4:1ff 16:1 22:18 I Th. 3
 - b. God does not lure us to do evil, but He tests us, for the purpose of proving and maturing our faith. 1:2
 4. God will never allow the believer to be tempted beyond what he can bear, but will always provide a way of escape from sin. I Co. 10:13 Mt. 6:13
- D. You are tempted because of your own sinful desires. Jer. 17:9 Mark 7:21ff**
1. Not all desires are sinful. I Th. 2:17 Phil. 1:23 I Pe. 1:12 Luke 22:15 Heb. 13:4
 2. *Desire* here refers to any sinful desire – sexual lust, greed/covetousness, gluttony, vengeful anger, substance abuse. 4:2 Mark 4:18 Col. 3:5 Gal. 5:16,24 Eph. 2:3 II Ti. 2:22 4:3 John 2:16-17 II Pe. 1:4 2:10,18 Jude 1:16,18 Ro. 1:24 6:12 13:14
 3. In contrast with God, Who is perfectly holy, you are sinful and thus temptable.
 4. Your own sinful desires entice you and carry you into sin. Pr. 7:16ff
 5. You can't blame the devil, other people, or fate. 4:7 Gen. 3:9-13 Ex. 32:21ff
 6. Jesus teaches that you sin, not because of what comes from outside of you, but what comes from within you. Mark 7:14ff

III. The course of temptation – conception, birth and death. v. 15

- A. You need to know how temptation works so you can recognize the danger and find a way of escape.**
- B. Lust is conceived in your heart. 4:1 Mt. 5:28,22 Mark 7:14-23 Col. 3:5 I Jo. 2:16**

1. First comes the initial experience of temptation. II Sam. 11:2 I Kings 21:1-3 Gen. 3:6a Josh 7:21a I Jo. 2:16
 2. Then you are enticed by the deceitfulness of sinful desire. v. 16 Heb. 3:13 II Sam. 11:3 I Kings 21:4-6 Josh. 7:21b Pr. 23:31
 3. Lust captures your heart as sin is conceived.
- C. Lust conceived in the heart gives birth to sinful action. 4:2 Gen. 3:6b
1. What rules your heart controls your deeds. II Sa. 11:4 I Ki. 21:5-16 Josh 7:21
 2. Every sinful word and act reveals the bad condition of your heart. Mark 7:20-23
- D. Sin ultimately results in death. Ro. 6:23 7:5,10,13 Gen. 2:17 3:19 I Co. 15:22 Gal. 6:7-8 Pr. 7:22-27 6:25-35 5:20-23
1. Sin has deadly consequences. II Sam. 12:10-12,14 I Ki. 21:19,21-24
 2. The death caused by giving into temptation is in stark contrast to the crown of life given to those who endure. v. 12 Pr. 9:18 8:35
 3. The deceitfulness of sin – *Sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay.* v. 16

IV. Strategies for overcoming temptation - at each stage sin can be aborted.

- A. Guard your heart. Pr. 4:23 6:25 Phil. 4:8-9 I Co. 10:12 Gen. 39:9b John 15:5
- B. If sinful desire has been conceived in your soul, take radical action! Mt. 5:28-30 4:1ff Ro. 14:23 Eph. 4:26-27 He. 3:13 10:24 II Ti. 2:22 Gen. 39:12 I Co. 15:33 Pr. 5:8
- C. When you feel like the temptation may be beyond what we can bear, remember God's promise and look for the way out He provides. I Cor. 10:13
- D. The way of escape from temptation typically has to do with the gospel.
1. Remember who you are in Christ – God has given you a new nature by which you can overcome sin. 1:18 Rom. 6:11 Eph. 4:17-24 II Co. 5:17 II Pe. 1:4
 2. Christ is better than whatever sin beckons you. Isa. 55:1-2
- E. When tempted, look ahead to the promised crown of life. v. 12 Ro. 8:18 II Co. 4:17f

V. Conclusion: Christ has won the victory over temptation for you.

- A. He resisted the full force of temptation's power. Mt. 4:1ff
- B. He comes to your aid. Heb. 2:17-18 4:14-16 7:26
- C. He has set you free from the death you deserve for your sinful failures. Heb. 2:14-15 9:14,28 10:14 Rom. 6:23 I Pe. 3:18 II Co. 5:21 Isa. 53:6
- D. He has set you free from slavery to sin. v. 18 Ro. 6:1ff II Co. 5:17
- E. Because you are in Him, you receive the crown of life. v. 12 Pr. 4:9 Rev. 2:10

Questions for discussion

1. Why would anyone blame God when they fall into temptation? Give examples.
2. In what ways have you been guilty of blaming God when you have been tempted to sin?
3. What reason does James give proving that God doesn't tempt us?
4. What about situations in which God is said to test His people (like Abraham)?
5. What then is the source of temptation?
6. How does James reflect the teaching of Jesus about the source of sin? Mark 7:15ff
7. How does James describe the process by which desire leads to sin and death?
8. Go through the stages James describes in analyzing a time when you gave into sin.
9. What strategies can you employ to resist temptation? Find at least two in the context.