

Saturday/Sunday, August 2-3, 2008

TEMPTATION

“How Did I Get Trapped?”

James 1:13-18

[DVD – “Man on the street interview”, from Sermon Spice]

INTRODUCE THEME

You could tell from the responses on the video that temptation at its best is a misunderstood topic; not just on the street but with followers of Jesus as well.

We ask questions like: *Is temptation sin? Does God tempt me? Why am I tempted with one thing while my friend is tempted in very different ways? When am I finally going to be free from temptation? Is being tempted an indication of spiritual immaturity? I feel trapped – is there any help on the way?*

These are important questions, good questions, which need to be answered. The Bible provides answers to these questions; look at James 1:13-18.

To recognize and avoid temptation’s traps we need to ...

1. **Be INFORMED.**

Knowing the truth about temptation can set you free; not only from the specific temptation but free to live the life you were meant to live.

You WILL be tempted.

(v. 13) **When** tempted...

It’s not “if” you will face temptations but “when, how often, what kind and how intense.” Oh thanks, Mike, I feel so much better now!

I’ve heard Jesus followers over the years say things like; *“If only I was stronger, more spiritual, prayed more, read Bible, listen closer to Wade/Mike’s sermons, etc. then I would not be tempted.”*

This is just not true. We will see next week that there are ways that we can avoid increasing certain temptations by the choices we make but not eliminate them altogether.

Why? Because, as we will see in a few minutes, temptation is primarily an inside job, a reality existing within each of us that tempts us to respond to both the internal and external prompts that we experience every day.

You are not ALONE.

(1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT) *But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience.*

No matter what the temptation: sexual lust, greed, pride, jealousy, anger, gluttony, hoarding, position, power, popularity, harsh words, the truth is you are not alone.

How many of you have said or thought, *“I’m the only one. Everyone has this area under control. No one really struggles like me. No one can understand just how difficult my struggle is.”* (Person from two decades ago on sexual lust; myth/lie, leads to isolation, trouble)

Being tempted is NOT sin.

Have you ever felt like this; *“I keep struggling to resist so I might as well give in, what’s the difference? It’s so hard. I’m already sinning, losing and disappointing God anyway. Why not just go for it?”*

I have felt like this many times.

That’s why I’m so glad for Heb. 4:15 that tells me, *“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”*

(Hebrews 2:18) *Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Jesus was tempted in every way. He suffered when facing temptation, just like us, so He could help people just like us.

To recognize and avoid temptation's traps we need to be informed and then we need to ...

2. Be **TRUTHFUL** (in words and action as it relates to temptation)

(v. 13) *When tempted, **no one should say**, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone;*

When facing temptation, the truth is ... God is NOT tempting you!

The fact that James feels the need to make this clear implies that there were some who were blaming God for the tempting moments in their life.

He gets lots of blame these days doesn't He; for sickness, death, difficult circumstances, financial troubles, etc. ... (My cancer)

We might blame God for temptation by believing or saying things like; "God, this is how You made me ... God, You are the one in control ..., God, I can't say no. It's not my choice ... God, my past/family DNA."

James tells us that God isn't the one tempting you ...

- He **can't** be tempted to do evil! (v. 13, nothing in Him to respond)
- He will **never** tempt anyone to do evil! (v. 13, purpose of tempting is to cause sin, destruction, God would not EVER do this; how this differs from testing spoken about earlier in chapter one)

(v. 16-17) ***Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

- His gifts bring life **not** death! (v. 16)
- He won't **ever** change! (v. 17)

It's me, it's you, it's all of us!

(v. 14-16) ***Each one is tempted** when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

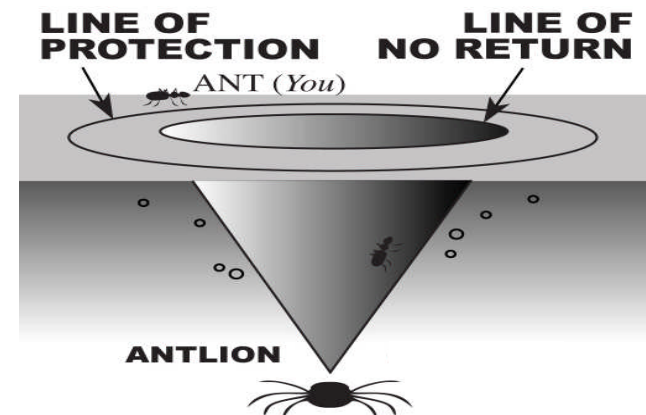
James reveals that the origin of temptation is within each of us; what He calls our "evil desires."

God is the originator of desire and passion within us. It's when these God-given desires become perverted (result of the fall of man) that they become destructive for each of us.

Our desire for food, when perverted, becomes gluttony; our desire for work, when perverted, produces workaholics and a performance driven lifestyle; our God-given desire to enjoy life, when perverted, becomes hedonism or complete self denial; our God-given desire for sexual intimacy, when perverted, leads to sexual addictions, lust, adultery, or homosexuality (Yvette); our desire to have what we need to live, when perverted, becomes materialism, idolatry or greed.

James tell us that these evil desires within us drag and entice us towards destructive attitudes and/or actions that, in the end, if not dealt with, result in death, not just physical, but the death of the person's spirit, mind, soul, emotions. James describes a death spiral that, if followed, will take us out!

[DVD - You Tube (ANTLION) - 2 ½ minutes, comment on narration]



Dragged – violent capture, you are no longer in control by your sin nature is; **Enticed** – come a little closer, just have a taste, take that second look

It all looks and feels so right but the end is the end of ant ... destruction.

To recognize and avoid temptation's traps we need to be informed, be truthful and finally we need to ...

3. Be TRANSFORMED.

*(v. 18) He chose to **give us birth** through the **Word of truth**, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all He created. (John 3:3)*

*In John 3:3 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is **born again**."*

*The word of truth spoken of in James is this; "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish but have **eternal life** [to begin NOW].*

Closing comments

Urge response to "Word of truth"

Encourage those being tempted

Next week "escape routes" that God provides so we can survive and soar!

Pray