

James 1C

- Chapter 1 of James moves forward into the fourth point on facing trials
 - The letter of James never fails to strike a chord with Bible students
 - I've received a lot of mail already on the book of James, and it seems the Holy Spirit is active in provoking fresh thinking and plenty of conviction to spread around
 - He speaks in such clear and powerful terms on issues we each know so well
 - Trials, doubts, temptations, lust, inaction, favoritism
 - There's something for everyone here, isn't there?
 - In fact, on average, there is 1 imperative statement for every 2 verses in the book
- Today as we pick back up in Chapter 1, James is moving away from his third point on trials: the way to remain steadfast in facing external trials
 - And into his fourth point: how to face inward trials, which he calls temptations
 - And we can all identify with today's teaching, since we all have our own ways of suffering temptation

A man walked into the kitchen one day not too long ago to find his wife stalking around with a fly swatter.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Hunting Flies" she replied.

"Oh... Killing any?" he asked, after pausing to watch her make several rounds around the kitchen table.

"Yep, 3 males and 2 females", she replied.

"How can you tell?" he asked, quite intrigued.

"3 were on the refrigerator and 2 were on the phone."

- Let's consider James' words beginning in vs.13-15

[James 1:13](#) 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.

[James 1:14](#) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

[James 1:15](#) Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

- Up to this point, James had been focused on how a man or woman of faith should address trials or tests
 - And James attributed the source of these trials to the Lord, in the sense that we know He is in control of our life circumstances
 - And He brings tests as a way to reveal or expose our degree of spiritual maturity
 - So as we are taught of the Lord by His Spirit living and working in us...
 - Similarly, we are tested by the Lord at times to help us show that work to ourselves and others, so that God may be glorified
 - A glory that is revealed when Christ's work is revealed in us

[Gal. 2:20](#) "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, **but Christ** lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- But at this point in the letter James needs to make an important distinction between these external tests brought by God for our benefit
 - And inward tests or temptations that are not the result of God's design
 - They are natural products of our sinful nature
 - Yet they are still a reality, and we must face them
 - And like external tests, we face them best when we understand them with godly wisdom and respond to them according to that wisdom
- In v.13, James begins with the simple conditional statement, let no one say when he is tempted...
 - James doesn't say "if" he is tempted
 - By using "when", James emphasizes the simple reality of temptations

- They are a universal experience...we all have temptations
 - This isn't some academic discussion, or a theoretical possibility
 - This is a certainty...we all face temptations
 - And the way we respond to them has eternal consequences, just like any test or trial
- Now when we experience temptations, we could be confused about their source
 - Earlier James taught that trials are tests brought by God, so now we might think incorrectly that temptations to sin are also God-ordained tests as well
- So James corrects us in v.13...when we face a temptation, we cannot say God is placing this temptation before us as a test
 - Temptations do not originate with God
 - And James gives us an important principle or pattern to understand why we can know this
 - First, God Himself is not tempted by evil
 - The Greek word is *apeiratos*, which is un-temptable
 - Another way to say it is God has no experience with evil, no relationship with it
 - Evil is a foreign, unknown thing to God
 - When he says God is not tempted by evil, James means in the sense of succumbing to it
 - God does not give in to evil and participate in it
 - This is an important distinction because we know Hebrews teaches that Jesus was tempted, and we need to appreciate the distinction

[Heb. 4:15](#) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been **tempted** in all things as we are, yet without sin.

- In James, the issue is whether God has ever come to know and experience evil by succumbing to temptation...He hasn't

- In Hebrews, the issue is whether God in Christ had opportunity to give in to temptations...He did, but He never took the opportunity
- So our God is not tempted by evil, and therefore He doesn't tempt us
- God is never in the business of tempting us to sin
 - You may wonder about the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, when it says Father, lead us not into temptation
 - When we studied this in Luke, we learned that the phrase in Greek is a figure of speech, a *litotes*
 - It means expressing a positive idea by negating the contrary
 - The proper way to translate it into English would be, Father help us stay away from temptation
- God doesn't tempt because He's not experienced in sin, which leads us to an important principle
 - We must have experienced something for ourselves before we share it with others
 - And when it comes to sin, we will share what we know
 - Sin moves from person to person, flesh to flesh
 - After woman was deceived by Satan and disobeyed God in the Garden, what was the very next thing she chose to do?
 - She shared her sin with her husband
 - Having been tempted by sin, she now became a source of temptation for another
 - If we give in to evil temptations, making it a part of who we are, we may become an instrument for the enemy to pass it on to others
 - If we are prone to deception, we may give rise to deception in others
 - If we gossip, others may follow
 - If we judge others, others will judge us

- If we are undisciplined, unrestrained, uncontrolled, we become the seed for similar behavior in others
 - But if we refrain from giving in to temptations, by the Spirit's power working in us, we move away from that familiarity and become less likely to share it
- So since God isn't the source of our temptations, where do these internal tests, these temptations to sin come from?
 - In v.14 James says they come from our own lust
 - And in fact, James lines out a sequence or process by which temptations take hold and cause us to sin
 - The process has three steps, and James uses the analogy of childbirth to explain the process
 - First, the starting point is a lust that draws us away and entices us
 - According to Thomas Constable, lust is the desire to do or have or be something apart from the will of God
 - It takes many forms
 - We often use the word lust too narrowing, as in a sexual context or in describing appetites of the flesh
 - But James is speaking of it very broadly...all manner of desires outside God's will
 - These desires draw us away and entice us
 - The words in Greek mean to lure with bait
 - The bait is something outside ourselves
 - But something inside us is attracted to that bait, even though God's will is not met by that attraction
 - But when you think about it, when we use bait to fish, we are lying to the fish
 - The fish thinks the bait is something good, a morsel of food that will strengthen the fish and make it grow

- But in reality, the bait is a danger to the fish despite the fact that it looks attractive
- James' message is the same here
 - Our lust is drawn by the attractiveness of some kind of bait, but in the end the attraction is built on a lie
 - The lie is part of what makes our drawing away turn to sin
 - Because we are choosing to accept the lie rather than God's wisdom and truth...His will for us
- So, step one of the temptation process is giving in to a lust for something that appears desirable, but in fact is dangerous and unhealthy
 - To use the childbirth analogy, we could say that giving in to lustful desires is like becoming pregnant
 - It begins a process that has an inevitable conclusion
 - But the effects of that process aren't necessarily visible for a while
 - But over time the effect grows and becomes more visible
 - As we give into our lusts and enjoy the bait, it may seem good for a while...but the seed of sin is just growing
- Secondly, after lust has conceived, James says in v.15 that it will give birth to sin
 - Interestingly, James is teaching that the true sin of our lives is found in our response to lust, not in the temptation itself
 - I can be tempted to lustful thoughts as I look at a woman
 - But I don't sin until I give in to that desire and entertain those thoughts
 - Then I have been carried away by a desire and it has conceived sin in me
 - I had a choice to rely on the Spirit and turn away from the desire and the temptation
 - But if I take the bait, I enter into sin
 - James compares this moment to the birth process

- Giving in to lustful desires conceives the birth of sin
- Finally, when sin is accomplished (birthed), it brings forth death
 - Once sin is born, it takes on its own life and development, like a child
 - But just like human life has death waiting at the end of its course
 - Likewise, a course of sin brings an end of death
- What is the death James is talking about?
 - First we must continually remember this is a letter of exhortation written to believers about godly living
 - It's a letter of sanctification, not of salvation
 - So the "death" must be a statement of consequence for the believer
 - It can't be speaking about the eternal death that comes upon an unbeliever...that's simply not the context of James' point in this chapter
 - So what kinds of "death" are possible outcomes for the believer who gives into lust and pursues a course of sin?
 - One obvious answer is physical death
 - It's a Biblical principle that when God's people choose a life of sin over one of obedience, they are testing God's patience
 - And in some cases, God will visit physical death upon believers who continue in a life of disobedience
 - Consider the words of the writer of Hebrews

[Heb. 10:28](#) Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

[Heb. 10:29](#) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

[Heb. 10:30](#) For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

- The writer admonishes those who might continue to follow the Jewish system of sacrifice after having come to know Christ as the One True Sacrifice
 - If God was willing to punish His people for their failings under the Old Covenant, how much more will He act against those under the New?
- Look at the final statement in v.30: the Lord will judge His people
 - We're talking about a consequence for the believer that begins with premature physical death brought by God as a consequence for willful sin
- The second way in which a believer may suffer death is in the sense of how James used "life" earlier in v.12
 - In the earlier verse, James offered as a reward for successfully facing trials the "crown of life"
 - I believe his use of the word death here is an intentional contrast to the life of that crown
 - Remember, the crown isn't a reward for salvation, but for persevering through trials
 - So if we fail the test of inward trials, of temptations, that sin will conceive a "death" in us in the sense that it risks us losing the crown of life, our reward
- Consider Paul's words when speaking about the consequences for a member of the Corinthian church who was giving in to lust and willfully sinning
 - In this case, the brother was engaged in a sexual relationship with his father's wife
 - So to that person, Paul used his apostolic authority to bring the following consequence according to God's will:

[1Cor. 5:3](#) For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.

[1Cor. 5:4](#) In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,

[1Cor. 5:5](#) I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- As Paul says, we know this believer's place in heaven was secure, because it was gained by faith and not works
 - Good works don't earn our salvation, and similarly evil works (i.e., sin) can't forfeit our salvation
 - But Paul says this man must suffer the destruction of his flesh (likely some kind of untimely death), for the protection of the church and the saving of his spirit
- I think of it like a football team, where the team is the Body of Christ
 - We are all in the game of life playing a part for Christ, Who is leading us and training us and calling the plays and evaluating our performances
 - And the team is striving to move in a common direction under the Lord's direction
 - And our role is just to listen to the coach and do as He directs
 - But if someone on the team is stubbornly refusing to follow the Lord's direction, that player begins to hurt the team
 - And eventually, the Lord has no choice but to bench that player
 - They are always a member of the team, but they may be taken out of the game to ensure the success of the team
 - And to prevent the individual from doing any more harm to himself and others around him
- I think that's Paul's purpose in the words he wrote to the Corinthian church
 - And I think that's James' emphasis as well when he warns us that when sin is accomplished (*apoteleo* = brought to an end), it leads to a death of sorts
- Now James offers encouragement and a path away from this course of sin and death

[James 1:16](#) Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

[James 1:17](#) 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.

[James 1:18](#) In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

- James transitions with do not be deceived
 - Don't take the bait, the deception that our lusts lead to good things and can't hurt us...
 - That's a lie
 - Don't accept that lie, but know the truth
- The good things of life can't be found in this world
 - The world is full of bait, but the good gifts are from above
- James says every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above
 - The English just doesn't do this phrase justice
 - In Greek, the words for given and gift are different
 - The first emphasizes the process of delivering good things
 - The second emphasizes the result, a gift received
 - So a better way to say this in English might be, "The giving of good things always originates in Heaven, and the good things you receive have all come from Heaven."
 - Simply put, anything that is truly good is of God and must originate with Him and be given by Him
 - Nothing outside God's will and purpose is considered good
 - So, don't be deceived by things that don't come from God
 - Look to God for what is good in your life
 - Have eyes for eternity and set your mind on things above
 - James refers to God as the Father of lights, a term found nowhere else in the Bible, but present in other Jewish writings like the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Lights is a reference to the heavenly bodies

- So James is reminding us that God created everything in the universe, especially the Light that represents His goodness
 - And there is no variation in His nature, such that He could never shift from being light to being shadow (i.e., darkness)

1John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

- We can trust God to be our source of good and know that if something is evil or tempting us to sin, it isn't of God
- As we conclude, let's review what James has taught this morning
 - James clarified that the source of our inward trials, our temptations to sin is not God Himself but our own lusts
 - So the wisdom we need to face this inward trial successfully is first to recognize its course: our flesh is a source of evil
 - Secondly, we must understand that God is a source for the good and perfect (i.e., complete) works that we seek to do instead of succumbing to temptations
 - Praying for the wisdom to face temptations will be answered, as James said earlier, with good gifts to overcome these trials
 - Gifts in the form of the mind and attitude of Christ Who dwells in us
 - But our active participation in this process is an imperative James places upon the believer
- Then finally in v.18 James proves God's willingness to step into our sinful lives and transform us into a new person
 - James says it was the exercise of God's will that brought us forth
 - The term brought forth in Greek is a polite way of saying childbirth
 - James is describing our new birth, the way we were born again
 - It happened as a result of God's will

- He purposed our rebirth and brought it about
 - And it happened as a product of the word of truth (the Gospel or the word of God more generally)
- So that we are the first fruits of His plan to eventually rebirth all creation into a new Heavens and Earth
- Consider what that means
 - If God stepped into our sinful lives and brought us to an awareness of Him even before we knew Him, then doesn't that say something about God's intent?
 - Paul says in Philippians:

[Phil. 1:6](#) For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began** a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

- James' encouragement to us is to trust that if God started something in us, then He must be prepared to continue that work
 - We can take hope and encouragement by that, and seek His wisdom and intervention in times of temptations trusting He will answer those prayers to bring us out of that moment
- But our willful response to Him is a part of the process as well
 - Which is why in Romans 8:30 Paul leaves sanctification out of his progressive list of milestones in a believer's life
 - We were all chosen by God, justified by God and will all be glorified
 - But whether we reach spiritual maturity is an open question
 - And it depends on our willingness to yield to the Spirit's direction