

James 1:12-18

12God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. 13And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. 14Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. 16So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. 17Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. 18He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.

- *Tell Greek Mythology story...be captivated by something more beautiful.*
- So many Christians choose the Odysseus strategy...Tie me up. Have you ever felt that way?
 - I bet we can all look back on a night of our life or a weekend or a trip where we wish someone would have tied us to our couch or our parents kitchen table.
 - where you seem to give into temptation most often, you'll probably find that your strategy is willpower and sheer force, it's not working. Temptation keeps winning.
- To be clear, there are certain seasons and certain temptations where it's all we can do to just survive but... a better plan than rope, blindfolds, and ear plugs. These verses teach us like Jason did...hearing something better, wanting something better, believing something better.
- So these verses teach us 3 things today: *Why we need to endure temptation, why we don't endure temptation, and how we can endure temptation.*

1. Why we need to endure (v. 12)

- This verse is really important because James is describing a benefit beyond eternal life. Crown of life not *eternal* life... We all struggle to believe that God is going to back out on his end of the deal...cancel culture... not the gospel
- 100% grace and faith in Jesus, *but* Christian character matters. You can be saved, *and* blessed now *and* rewarded later based on the kind of life you live. This is really important, get this. It's possible to be a Christian but to live a miserable life because you never take the steps to develop Christian character. This is called *discipleship*.

- So this is why we need to endure temptation and inner trials, because every victory is developing Christian character, and making your life more blessed, and in some way storing rewards in heaven for you. *CS Lewis analogy*. So why don't we?

2. Why we don't endure (v. 13-15)

- James is going to teach us a masterclass on why we give into temptation so often, and the first thing he says is "stop blaming God!" Look at it (**read v. 13**) What does it mean?
- It means that God is never testing you to fail you. Think about that. God can never be tempted to do you wrong. He cannot be vindictive, unfair or jealous. There's never a time where God can be tempted to do anything for you but the right thing.
- Now we probably don't ever say, "God is tempting me," but we do blame him. (If God hadn't made me like this, if God hadn't let me go there or be around that person etc.) When God tests us he absolutely always puts us in a situation where we can pass the test. (**Read 1 Corinthians 10:13**) So If it's not God's fault, who's fault is it? It's yours.
- This is going to sound harsh but it's one of those painful truths that has the power to set us free, if we can understand the lesson James is teaching. One of the reasons trouble and trials are so valuable for a believer is because they reveal the truth.
- force us to take a hard honest look at who we are. Every time we give into temptation it's because *we want* to do it. We rationalize our struggles... "I make mistakes, but that's not who I am," but these verses disagree. James says when you give into temptation it's because you are the *type of person* who does the things you did."...much more pessimistic view of your life than culture... Psalm 51
- We tend to fight sin and temptation at the top level, but the problem is much deeper. Everything you do that you wish you didn't do comes from your deepest desires. (
 - The Greek word used for desires is *epithumia*... "over desires." not necessarily wanting bad things, it's wanting things too badly.
 - This helps us understand sin=trying to find your self-esteem in anything other than Jesus, and this explains why over desires are so dangerous because we're convinced we have to have whatever it is in order to be somebody...meth or being a mom...if you define your self worth through them they shape your beliefs, emotions, thoughts, and actions that are not the person God wants you to be.
 - There is something that you want at your core at the center of your being...if you had it...complete or whole or not insecure or not afraid anymore. It's not sex or money or power (Order/control, safety, community, affirmation) Tests reveal what you want that you don't have. *Silence*

- If your faith was 100% complete and perfect and you were absolutely like Jesus, you would only want to do the father's will, so you want something you don't have and it's usually when you lose it or recognize you don't have it life falls apart.
- You can trace every sin in your life back to that greatest desire. Trying to attain it or cope without it. This is what James means when he says temptation comes from our desires. And when it forms our beliefs, emotions, and thoughts it gives birth to sin, and eventually sin gives birth to death. So what is the alternative?

3. Why we can endure (v. 18)

- We are presented with two options in this passage.
- One option says, "give in to your desires and give birth to death. "
- Another option says, "believe that Christ gave birth to you through his word, and you are his prized possession."
- We're talking about believing that I have everything I need in Christ instead of believing that there's something out there I have to have. I already have it!
- I told you about Odysseus and the sirens at the beginning of this sermon, but there is another story about the sirens and a sailor named Jason and his men.
- Jason also knew of the danger of the Sirens, but he used a different strategy. Instead of wax and rope, he had a man named Orpheus travel with him and play a lute. As long as he played, anyone who listened to his music heard only his music.
- As soon as Jason's ship came near the island of the Sirens, the crew assembled on deck and Orpheus began playing. The men were able to ignore the sirens because they were captivated by the beautiful music of Orpheus.