

JAMES 1:13-18
“DON’T TEMPT ME!”

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 1 as we continue our study through this letter that James wrote to Jewish Christians who were scattered because of the persecution that was coming against their faith in Christ.

And James wants them to grow up, to mature in the faith. That tells me that they were immature, and they needed to grow up. And as I read through this letter there are many things that I need to change in my life and I guess the idea is, we all need to grow up!

As we have seen over the last few weeks, the focus of James chapter 1 is ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING!*** Not an easy topic and yet, in some churches it is ignored. But what happens when suffering happens? The people are not equipped to handle it and they come to faulty conclusions. I will show you what I mean in a minute.

In the verses we will be looking at this morning, here in James chapter 1, we are going to be looking at the idea of, ***“Don’t tempt me!”*** In fact, that is the title of this message.

I have broken James 1:13-18 down like this:

GOD TESTS OUR FAITH – JAMES 1:13

SOURCE OF TEMPTATION – JAMES 1:14-15

BEWARE OF DECEPTION – JAMES 1:16

GOD’S GIFTS – JAMES 1:17

STANDING STRONG IN TRUTH – JAMES 1:18

Let me show you how important this is. First of all, we need to understand that God does test our faith, not to show Him where we are at, but to show us.

With that test there are temptations and we need to understand where those temptations are coming from, and they are not from God!

Thus, the warning for us is not to be deceived because the Devil loves to use deception to confuse us.

And the perspective we need to have is that God’s gifts are perfect for our lives. They are not dark, destructive, bad for us.

With the knowledge of all that, we can stand strong in the truths of God found in the Word of God!

You see, very practical and important for us to understand as this story shows us. We are told,

A young woman came to Christ in a marvelous way. Her conversion was, from a human perspective, partly due to the fact that she had come to a very low place in her marriage, making her intensely aware of her spiritual need. But having met Christ in her extremity, her life immediately took on an attractive buoyance. She was truly a new person – and it was beautiful to behold. Sadly, her troubled husband did not follow suit as she had so dearly hoped. After a year of continuing marital disappointment, she sought help from a counselor. Instead of receiving help, she became the victim of a professional seduction. It began with extravagant sympathy, compliments about her attractiveness (ostensibly to shore up her fractured ego), then subtly suggestive comments. The next appointment, she dressed and scented herself with the palpitating self-attention of a first date. She was seduced, and there followed the inevitable history of liaisons and further damage to her fragile self-esteem.

When she came to my wife and me, she was a ruined person seething with bitterness and rage. To be sure, she was a victim of an unprincipled male in professional sheep’s clothing, but

she was also a victim of self. But amazingly it was neither to him nor herself that she placed ultimate blame. Rather, she said through clenched teeth, “I asked God to lead me to the right person, and he led me to this man. It is God’s fault! He is to blame for what happened!”

This was the beginning of years of bitterness and estrangement from her Lord, ironically the only one who loved her with an everlasting love. Most stories like this do not end well. Happily, I can say in this case she did repent, and after more than a decade her husband came to Christ. All this after the needless miseries of those terrible years!

This woman’s absurd accusation was nothing new. In fact, we find the same thing at the beginning of human history when ridiculous Adam said to God, “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Genesis 3:12). Way to go, Adam! “And, yea, verily Adam and Eve did have 930 years more of marital bliss!” We may say, shame on Adam. But the truth is, none of Adam’s children like to take the blame for sin, and we will do almost anything to escape it – blame others, blame our loved ones, even blame God.

Blaming the gods was typical of the pagan mind-set in Biblical times because their gods were capricious [unpredictable], vengeful, soap-opera deities who taunted and tantalized humanity. We read over and over again of Zeus and his pantheon [all the gods of a people] in classical Greek writings like *The Odyssey*. Jewish believers, dispersed in various pagan cities by persecution, were not immune to this mind-set. Evidently in their misery certain of their people were saying God was tempting them to fall; that he had lost patience with them and was deliberately bringing them down. This being so, God was to blame for their sin.

Putting the blame elsewhere is popular in our culture. Will Rogers once remarked that there are two eras in American history – “the passing of the buffalo and the passing of the buck.” Someone else has said, “To err is human; to blame it on the divine is even more human.” How true this is of all of us!

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp. 43-44

I don’t know where any of you are at this morning, the difficulties you are facing. Maybe even the persecution you are facing for your faith in Christ by family and friends. And it is easy to blame others, to even blame God but we if we do, we have lost the correct perspective of things.

And, as I have said, my prayer as we go through these verses is that we would have a correct perspective of things and in the end, we will be able to ***STAND STRONG IN TRUTH!***

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in James chapter 1, beginning in verse 13, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we look at this idea, “***Don’t tempt me!***”

JAMES 1 **VERSE 13**

Keep in mind that this first point is that ***GOD TESTS OUR FAITH***. Now as you read this, these Jewish believers seemed to be saying that God was tempting them. That is not what God does and we will be looking at that in a minute.

If you remember from last week, we read in James 1:12, “**Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**”

As you compare that with what we just read here in James 1:13, it seems to contradict each other. So, what is James trying to tell us here, what is his point and how do we reconcile the two?

First of all, it is important for us to understand the difference of what God is doing and what Satan is doing because there is a big difference!

Back in James 1:12 I believe James is speaking of trails or tests that God brings into our lives to test our faith, to help us to grow.

But here in James 1:13 and really James 1:14 as well, he is speaking of temptation. How do I know that is true? Let me explain.

The words “**trials**” and “**temptations**” come from the same Greek word, PEIRASMOS, (pi-ras-mos’). Thus, when we read of situations that will strengthen us, help us to grow, mature us, they are from God and they are trials to test our faith.

On the other hand, Satan will come along to tempt us, to exploit the trial we are going through so we might sin.

God wants to build us up - and He uses trials to do that. Satan wants to destroy us – and he uses temptations to do that. It can be the same situation, it just depends on how we respond to it!

That is what Spurgeon said, “Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God’s side, and a temptation from Satan’s side, just as Job suffered from Satan, and it was a temptation; but he also suffered from God through Satan, and so it was a trial to him.”

Keep in mind, don’t lose sight of that fact that temptation does not come from God. And yes, God does allow it, but He Himself does not entice us to evil, though God may test our faith *without* a solicitation to evil (**nor does He Himself tempt anyone**).

I am sure you heard of the Christian man who was on a diet, he needed to lose weight. And as he was driving one day he saw in the distance the sign for a donut shop.

It was tough, and he thought about it and decided to pray about it and he prayed, “Lord, if there is a parking spot in front of that donut shop then I know you will want me to stop there. And if there is no parking space, I will just keep going knowing you don’t want me to go there!”

And it was tough, but it only took him seven times driving around the block before a parking space in front of the donut shop opened up. “It must be God’s will for me to get some donuts!” Not exactly and you can’t blame God for this one, even though many do try as they find themselves in situations that they have placed themselves in.

Think about it. How often do we like to blame God for our sin! But it is impossible for God to tempt you, it is a foreign concept to God.

Now, I have heard people say who are living in an adulterous relationship, “God has brought us together!” No, the Devil tempted you and you took his bait and got hooked.

You can’t blame God for this and you can’t blame the Devil, he didn’t force you, it was your choice!

And for these Jewish believers, they were struggling because persecution drove them away from their homes, from their families and now, they were blaming God for what has come upon their lives. That was wrong.

In fact, as I have said, that was the character of the gods in pagan mythology. One writer put it like this,

The gods of heathen imagination are always conceived both as liable to temptation to moral evil, and as themselves tempters. The conception of their character comes from man’s wicked heart, and the stream cannot rise higher than its source.

- Robert Johnson, Lectures Exegetical and Practical on the Epistle of James, p. 101

That may be what the heathen gods do or really demons, but it is not the God of the Bible, not at all! James says, “**... for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**” James 1:13.

In other words, James is categorically forbidding the claim that temptation comes from God. It is not possible for that to happen. But why? Because it is not the nature of God to do that and we will see that as we read on!

You see, that Greek phrase, “**cannot be tempted by evil**” literally means that “God is untemptable.”

Like I have said, that should just make sense because God is true to His attribute of absolute holiness. He can't go in another direction.

One writer put it like this,

In the stainless purity of His character lies our security. If saints can give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, struggling men may take courage also, since God's purity is not against us, but for us in our conflict with evil. It is madness to throw away this sheet anchor of faith. This anchor holds.

- W. Boyd Carpenter, The Wisdom of James the Just, p. 129

We will see that God has good for our lives and in that good it may not be easy, but it is what is needed.

That means when we face difficult times, when things get tough, we must not blame God for what is coming our way but seek direction from Him in the lessons He is showing us through these tough times.

And it is not easy. If it was easy we would not need God. But we do need Him, and He desires to see us through these times we will go through or are going through right now.

And the wonderful thing is that if you lack wisdom in what you should do, then just ask Him and He will tell you.

Remember what we were told in James 1:5, “**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**”

God is not holding back but He wants to give us the wisdom we need to live out our lives. But we must **ASK** Him, **SEEK** His wisdom, and if you do you will **FIND** it!

How can I be so sure? Because James tells us that God wants to give us wisdom “**liberally**” and that is a great comfort to me and it should be to you.

So, as we find ourselves in various trials, various situations, God wants us to seek Him for wisdom, He wants to give us the wisdom we need to walk accordingly.

Now, let me say this. If you want wisdom, what should you do? We make it so complicated and maybe the reason we do is because we don't like the wisdom that God is giving to us!

You see, as we go to the Word of God, the Bible, that is where you need to start. And, the place to end, well, that is also the Bible.

You see, God is not going to deviate from His Word and thus, true wisdom will always be consistent with God's Word, we just need to apply it to our lives!

And as you seek God's wisdom in a given situation then do so in faith. James also warned that if you ask in unbelief then your life will be like a roller-coaster with all kinds of ups and downs.

You know what I mean. Things are going well, then you are up. But then, something happens, and all of a sudden your life is plunging downward until that trial, that temptation is over and you are back up again.

But God does not want our lives to be like a wild ride on roller-coaster, but a walk that is following our Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ!

Listen to how James put it in James 1:6-8, **“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”**

You trusted God for your salvation, now can you trust Him with your life? You need to. I am not saying that you won't go through tough times, you will. But your life will be steady, the anchor will hold because your faith is in Christ and His promises to you through His Word. The wisdom of God has been given to you and you can walk accordingly!

We also need to remember that temptation is a normal part of the spiritual warfare Christians will experience in this life - and in and of itself is not sin - even Jesus was tempted. In Hebrews 4:15 we are told, **“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**

The temptation is not sin but what we do with that temptation can lead us to sin and we will see that again, as we read on.

And let me ask you this. Have any of you been tempted before? Of course you have and as the day started there were probably many temptations that you faced!

And here is the wonderful news, at least it should be. The things that once drew us into sin, those temptations, cease to do so because our desires are being conformed to God's! At least that is how it should be, right? Of course that is right. And yes, we do fall, we do stumble, but our Lord is there to pick us up. God is molding us and shaping us into the men and women that He wants us to be!

So, we have seen in this verse that God is not the source of temptation, but ***GOD TESTS OUR FAITH!***

As we read on we will see the ***SOURCE OF TEMPTATION.***

VERSES 14-15

I find these verses interesting because we like to blame everyone else for the predicament we are in, the troubles we find ourselves in. And what does James tell us who is to blame? “You the man!”

It is not the Devil, it is not the world, it is our flesh! Yes, the Devil and the world can influence us, tempt us, but it is our flesh that is drawn down that path.

And that is interesting to me because when James says **“drawn away”** it comes from the Greek word EXELKO, (ex-el'-ko) and it was often used as a hunting term that spoke of a baited trap that was used as a lure to capture an unsuspecting animal.

The word **“enticed”** is the Greek word DELEAZO, (del-eh-ad'-zo) and it was used as a fishing term to refer to bait, to bait a hook!

That is Satan's plan, to deceive us into thinking that sin is good, and ***WE*** take a bite.

You see, we are drawn away by our own fleshly desires and as we begin to think about sin, fantasize about it, the end result is that sin is birthed in our lives and sin will bring about death!

It is as Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”**

Folks, sin is not a sickness, we can't blame God for it, but it comes from our own evil heart if we give into temptation!

But we love to blame all kinds of people and things instead of taking the responsibility ourselves. J. Vernon McGee wrote, “Man, is always ready to shift responsibility for his sins. If he cannot blame God, he will adopt an approach of modern psychology by saying that sin is a sickness. In this way he hopes to escape judgment. But sin is not a sickness; it is a moral failure for which man must give account. Some even try to blame inanimate things for sin. But material “things” are not sinful in themselves. Sin does not originate there. James tracks the lion to its den when he says: **“Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”** Sin comes from within us, from our old, evil, fallen, unregenerate nature. Jesus said, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19).”

We need to understand that, or we will fall prey to the scheming, the traps that the Devil and the world place before us.

I hope that is clear. Yes, I absolutely agree that Satan certainly tempts us, but the only reason temptation has a hook in us is because of our own fallen nature, which corrupts our God-given *desires*. We often give Satan too much credit for his tempting powers and fail to recognize that we are *drawn away by our own desires*.

And some people practically beg Satan to tempt them.

Let me show you what I mean, and I think this will drive the point home. We are told,

On that fateful afternoon my boys were slowly trolling a salmon-colored, soft plastic, spinner-bladed jig, innocuously named “Little Fishy,” when it passed by the lair of the monster bass. The combination of the speed of the lure, its depth, the slant of the sun, and the refraction of the light ineluctably dragged the old bronze-backed bass away from his lair, just as the Greek words “dragged away” in our text describe. Then he began to follow the lure, “enticed,” as our text has it, by its peculiar wiggle and the delicate fibrillations, so that he opened his mouth wide and in a sudden burst engulfed the jig. My boys’ shouts echoed across the lake, and today that fish’s grand, painted, mummified form graces my sons’ wall. It was a remarkable experience, but not unique, for it is universal among fishermen. The ancient Greek Oppian used these words to describe drawing a fish from its original retreat under a rock, so that it succumbs to the bait.

. . . When the temptation passes by, we are drawn away from the things which keep us safe. Soon they are far behind us as we are lured by the bright, delicious temptation, and in a moment we forget who and what we are and throw caution to the wind and bite. So it was for Eve and Adam and Samson and David and Demas and . . .

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp. 47-48

And I am sure we can place our name after Demas because we have been there, we have been drawn away from that which is good, and we have been enticed to do evil. And it will give birth, it will do what it is supposed to do, cause you to sin and that sin brings forth death!

Someone has put it this way, and I think it is correct. “Sow a thought, reap an attitude. Sow an attitude, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.”

That is what James is saying here and it is a warning to us not to go down that path because it leads to death and destruction.

This is so simplistic and yet Satan uses it with tremendous success. He convinces us that in pursuing our corrupt desires it will produce in us life and goodness, satisfaction, and we take the bait!

Remember what Jesus said of Satan and then what He has to offer us in John 10:10, **“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”**

Don’t listen to the lies of the Devil, don’t let temptation give birth to sin in your life but find that abundant life in Christ for all He has for us is good!

You see, we need to stay away from places, people and websites where the devil can “bait” you. Make no mistake about it, the best defense is a good strong offense.

Therefore, surround yourself with good friends, hang out in good places (like church) and fill your mind with good thoughts.

What do I mean by that? Listen to what Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

I think that is pretty clear!

So, we have seen here the ***SOURCE OF TEMPTATION!*** It is not the Devil, it is not the world, it is our flesh! Yes, the Devil and the world can influence us, tempt us, but it is our flesh that is drawn down that path.

It does seem so obvious, so why do we struggle so much with these things? It is our next point, ***BEWARE OF DECEPTION!***

VERSE 16

What is James speaking of when he tells us not to be deceived? Let’s face it, there is much deception out in the world today that has infiltrated the Christian church. That is not the issue here with James.

Remember; context, context, context!

James is speaking of the goodness of God and that God does not tempt us to sin. And it really is opening the door as he will speak of the goodness of God in the next verse.

But think about what Satan does to us and we listen. He loves to convince us that the pursuit of our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us. And, in reality, it is the exact opposite. In fact, it brings death and destruction to our lives as I have said. (John 10:10)

Don’t be taken in by the bait he dangles before you! And, as I have said, in this line of thought, James is telling these Jewish believers who were suffering persecution, had to flee their homes because of it, don’t be deceived and blame God for these things, the temptations that they were facing, because these things are from the Devil and they are evil at their core!

And, if they sinned they needed to grow up and stop blaming God for their sin and be responsible for their own actions!

One writer put it like this,

To harbor the false concept that God tempts people is to cast grave suspicion on His character. It is a grievous doctrinal error that must have dangerous consequences for daily conduct. “My dear brothers” is the first of three occurrences of this full address in James (1:19;

2:5). The warning is prompted by his strong affectionate relationship to his readers. The verbal *agapetoi*, here rendered “dear,” is more literally “beloved” and marks the close relationship between writer and readers. They are the recipients of his heartfelt love. As members of the family of God, they must not allow a false view of God to quench their filial [family] relations to the head of the Christian family.

- D. Edmond Hiebert, James, p. 96

What James is basically saying, and I will paraphrase this for you, is this. “For your soul’s sake, brothers and sisters, stop being deceived!”

And now James will speak of **GOD’S GIFTS** and how perfect they are for our lives. Thus, **BEWARE OF DECEPTION!**

VERSE 17

As you read this please understand that this is a statement on the character of God. Make no mistake about it, God is perfectly good. God is absolutely holy. Therefore, God cannot do or give anything that is evil.

I think we are all in agreement about that fact but what happens when things are not going well? What happens when things are out of control? You see, our perspective changes and we think that either God has lost control or maybe that He is not good all the time.

But that is not what James is telling us here. There is no “**variation**” and there is no “**turning**” with God. He is good all the time because that is His nature!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

An old music teacher was once asked in greeting, “What’s the good news today?” The old man, without saying a word, walked across the room, picked up a tuning fork, and struck it. As the note sounded, he said, “That is A. It is A today, it was A 5,000 years ago, and it will be A 10,000 years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, the tenor across the hall is out of tune.” He struck the note again and said, “that is A, my friend, and that’s the good news today!”

The good news today and for all eternity is this: God is *infinitely* good. He has never had and will never have more goodness than he has now. He is unchangeably good. He stands like an eternal sun in a cloudless sky radiating unbroken goodness upon us. God will always – *eternally* – be good to us.

In his final column in *Eternity* magazine, a column he authored for over twenty years, Joe Bayly said, “Since I’ve shared the severity of God with my readers [speaking of the deaths of three of his children], I want to share the goodness of God in this final column.” And then he recounted God’s grace in the lives of each of his four living children. What is especially significant in relation to the truth of the test we are expounding are his final words:

Mary Lou and I are aware that all this represents the grace of God, but also that for ourselves and our children the road hasn’t ended. Yet we know that both by his severity and by his goodness God has shown consistent faithfulness. God is good. He is worthy of all trust and all glory.

Amen.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp. 55-56

I may not always understand the things that are happening in my life but this I do know with 100% certainty. That God is good, and He rains this goodness down upon us! May we thank

Him, may we look for that goodness in our lives because it is there, and praise Him for all He has bestowed upon us!

Now that phrase, “**Father of lights**” was an ancient Jewish title for God and it spoke of Him being the Creator, the giver of light!

The specific lights are the celestial bodies that light up the sky, both day and night. The sun and stars never stop giving light, even when we can’t see them.

Even so, there is never a shadow with God. When night comes, the darkness isn’t the fault of the sun; it shines as brightly as before. Instead, the earth has turned from the sun and darkness comes.

This means that God never changes.

Among modern theologians, there are some that are taken with something called *process theology*, which says that God is “maturing” and “growing” and “in process” Himself. Yet the Bible says that “**there is no variation or shadow of turning**” with God.

And this is so important for us to understand because the Devil likes to sow his seeds of deception and get us to doubt the goodness of God. I like what John tells us in I John 1:5, “**This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**” Exactly.

Now we know that intellectually, but what about practically? Can we allow that truth of God that is found in the Word of God to be played out in our lives? I hope so because that is what James is telling these Jewish believers and it is what the Holy Spirit is showing us!

One scholar put it this way,

“Unlike those sources of light, which, magnificent as they are, can nevertheless vary and will eventually fade, God’s character, power, wisdom, and love have **no variation or shifting shadow**. Through Malachi the Lord declares, “I, the Lord, do not change” (Mal. 3:6); through John, we are told that “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5); and through the writer of Hebrews we are assured that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever”

Praise God that we have that truth so when difficult times come, we can look to the promise of God’s Word instead of the situation we are facing.

You see, in this context of James speaking of the good gifts that God gives to us, he is speaking of the trials that we face, and you can see that in James 1:2-3.

Make no mistake about it, God is always working for our eternal best, not our temporal blessings and comfort.

And think about it like this. Something that may seem to be good from an earthly perspective (such as winning the lottery) may in fact wind up destroying us as believers. Look at the lives that have been destroyed by those who have won the lottery!

God knows exactly what we need and the work He is doing in us down here is to make us more like Him, that His nature would flow from our lives!

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean, how, even in the most tragic of stories, there is the goodness of God. We are told,

What should have been a joyous occasion turned into a nightmare of grief. Randy Hoyt watched helplessly as his wife Kris went into the hospital for an emergency Caesarean section operation when only 5 months pregnant. The bleeding was tremendous. Kris required 30 units of blood. As the doctors battled to save her life Randy cried out to God, “God, what do you want? I know you can heal her, why don’t you?”

God didn't heal her. Kris and 16 days later their prematurely born daughter Grace lost her struggle for life. Randy was left the single parent of six children.

"What about our plans, God?" he asked. "Who will teach the kids, guide them, and love them like their mother?"

Randy soon found out. A program was started which became known as "Help Bring Hope to the Hoyt Kids." Over the next six months, hundreds of people worked, sent money, donated meals and supplies and poured love into Randy's family. Randy received more than 500 letters, e-mails and cards from people who said they were praying for them.

At the end of the six months the medical bills are all paid, the mortgage has been paid and Randy is back at work. God did not save his wife, but God's love was ministered to Randy and his children in deeply profound ways after Kris' death.

The pain of Kris and Grace's death of course remained. Yet when he started to sink into despair Randy could imagine the two of them in heaven together, fully alive, healthy and full of joy. "See her as she is now," he felt the Holy Spirit saying. "She is alive."

Reflecting upon his experience Randy says, "I asked God for the life of my wife: I received instead a lesson on the nature of God. God is good. Armed with that knowledge, I have no fear for today or the future. God will always be enough . . . for any situation."

- Source Unknown

You see, instead of allowing this situation to make him bitter, he allowed it to make him better. Was it easy? Not at all, but he looked beyond the situation to the goodness of God and he rested in that. May we do no less.

The goodness of God seen in ***GOD'S GIFTS!***

VERSE 18

As you read this you can see that James understood that the gift of salvation was given by God. Make no mistake about it, salvation is not something that is earned by the work we do or our obedience.

Listen again to what James is saying here, "**Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth**" for salvation!

Keep in mind that James was just speaking of God being the Source of the original creation.

And I think that is what James is also doing here but of another creation, the new creation that we are in Christ. Let me share a few verses to show you what I mean.

In II Corinthians 5:17 Paul tells us, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**"

And in Galatians 6:15 we are told, "**For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.**"

We are a new creation in Christ and what I love is that the old ways, the old life, the old things have passed away and we are new in Him! If that is true, and it is, then why are so many Christians living in the past? Why are they holding onto the past? It makes no sense and the Devil loves to keep us in the past where we are weighed down instead of the new life we have in Christ! We are His creation, the new creation that God has brought forth!

Spurgeon put it like this, "Now mostly, men who are generous need to have their generosity excited. They will need to be waited upon; appeals must be laid before them; they must sometimes be pressed; an example must lead them on. But 'of his own will' God did to us

all that has been done, without any incentive or prompting, moved only by himself, because he delighteth in mercy; because his name and his nature are love because evermore, like the sun, it is natural to him to distribute the beams of his eternal grace.”

That is what God has done and what a great gift of life He has given to us!

Now the firstfruits that James is speaking of here I believe are believers who will be gathered together during His harvest, the Lord will gather us together to be with Him!

And let’s put this together here. James is telling us that we are to live lives that are consistent in holiness and goodness (maturity) and not lives that are *light* sometimes and *darkness* at other times (immaturity).

Thus, no matter what may come our way. No matter what difficulties we face. We must **STAND STRONG IN THE TRUTH!** The truth of God’s Word. Do not be deceived by the Devil but stand strong in the Lord and He will see you through.

Listen carefully to what one writer had to say. He wrote,

The God who is redeeming creation is a gracious God. Such a gracious God is not one who is trying to lead people to fall, but one who would use his giving to preserve them in the test.

- James Davids, The Epistle of James, p. 90

That is perfect. Never lose sight of that truth. You see,

GOD TESTS OUR FAITH so that we can grow, mature in the faith. We must learn to not let the tests that God brings into our lives to cause us to sin but to grow as we surrender to our Lord and the work He is doing in us and through us!

And make no mistake about it, the **SOURCE OF TEMPTATION** is the Devil and not from God. The Devil wants us to sin, he wants us to fail, he wants us to blame God for all we are going through to cause us to become paralyzed in our walk with the Lord. Don’t let him. But the Devil does not make us sin, we are drawn away and enticed and when we take the bait what is birthed in our lives is death because sin brings forth death in our lives and not life as so many think!

Thus, we must **BEWARE OF DECEPTION** because, like I have said, the Devil wants us to blame God and yet, God does not tempt us to sin, He tests our faith so that we can grow. The Devil wants to destroy our lives and God wants to give to us abundant life!

In fact, **GOD’S GIFTS** are perfect, they are good, there is no darkness to what God gives to us. And we can take that to the bank because God does not change, not at all.

And if we truly want to mature in the faith, we must **STAND STRONG IN THE TRUTH**. That is an important aspect to our Christian walk. Don’t go by feelings, don’t go by emotions, don’t go by what people may tell you. Go by the truths of God found in the Word of God and you will not be deceived!

As D. L. Moody said, “Trust in yourself, and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in your friends, and they will die and leave you; trust in reputation, and some slanderous tongue may blast it; but trust in God, and you are never to be confounded in time or eternity.”

Luther gave a similar testimony when he said, “I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.”

May we do that. May we walk by faith, step by step, following the Lord no matter where the trial may lead us because God is good and all that He has for us is to help us mature in the faith!

Now, as we read on next time, understand that the rest of this chapter gives practical instructions as how we, as the firstfruits of God's new creation, can properly represent and glorify Him in this world.

If this hasn't challenged you, then I am sure what we will be looking at next will! Thus,
TRUST IN THE LORD AND STAND STRONG IN HIS TRUTH!