

Nov. 24, 2013

Resisting Temptation and Sin **James 1:9-18**

We are continuing in a new sermon series from the book of James. It is my favorite book in the New Testament. It talks about many practical things that we can relate to in our Christian life. Things, that if we do not build our foundation on the reality of Christ and who we are in Christ, we can make some very bad decisions in our life.

All Stand and Read Scripture

James 1:9-18

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁹ But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰ and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him. 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. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

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. 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.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

James, writing in the power of the Holy Spirit, constantly calls us to decide if our faith and hope is truly in the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we going to trust Him and obey Him and believe that He is going to come through and do as He has promised or we going to trust in ourselves and our resources and try to do things on our own?

James is giving us this wisdom out of love, because, anything else that we put our hope and trust in will ultimately fail. In Christ, even if we die, we live. Isn't that a great promise? If we are in Christ when we die, we live with Christ for eternity. Without Christ, we just die, and there is an eternal separation from God.

James in verse 1, describes himself as a bondservant of "God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is fascinating because, the common consensus is that this James is the half-brother of Jesus. We know from the scriptures that Mary and Joseph had other sons and daughters after Mary's virgin birth of Christ.

Mark 6:3

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"

From Gal. 1:19 we know that he was an apostle "But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother." He was not one of the original twelve apostles, but he is described as an apostle by Paul.

In Galatians 2:9 we read that he was a pillar of the Church in Jerusalem.

We would consider this to be a very high position. Imagine being an apostle and a half brother of Jesus. He could have used that pedigree to impress people. Notice that James did not appeal to any of that. He described himself as a **bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the most significant identity that you can have, being a bondservant to Christ.**

According to Josephus, James died as a martyr in 62 AD. This may be the oldest book in the New Testament. It is believed that it was written between 44 and 49 AD. Notice that Gentiles were not mentioned in this book. He wrote "to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad." which would be the Jews. This is pretty much what Christianity was at this point. There wasn't much inclusion

of Gentiles during this period. They were called “scattered” because they had dispersed outside of Jerusalem due to persecution. Since they were spread out, this becomes the means by which the Gentiles were introduced to Christianity.

This was written to a group of persecuted people who were scattered and had lost a lot. The losses were important to them, but now they have Christ, which is more important.

BODY:

I. Understanding Rich and Poor

James 1:9-18

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁹ But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; ¹⁰ and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

The poor is to glory in his high position and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation. What is James talking about? This conflicts with our earthly view. We tend to think that if we are poor by earthly standards than God must not be blessing us. We will read later in the 2nd chapter of James that “God chose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom”.

We have to think from a Christian perspective. When one is poor, he has to rely upon the Lord for his needs. He does not have a lot of earthly possessions to manage. When he dies, he leaves nothing of earthly value behind. The poor man can truly glory that he is not side-tracked by earthly possessions.

The rich man must realize that his earthly possessions are temporary and of no significance in the long run. It is tempting to become self reliant and feel no need for God. He must humble himself before God and know that all things come from God. He must “glory in his humiliation”.

Are you rich or poor? By worldly standards, many of us could be considered rich, especially when compared to the poor in third world countries. When compared to Bill Gates, we would be poor.

There are many admonitions in the scripture for the rich man. The same admonitions apply to all of us, it is just much harder for the rich. They are not to love the world or the earthly treasures.

Matthew 6:19-21

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1 John 2:15-16

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁵ **Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** ¹⁶ **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

Matthew 19:24-26

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²⁴ Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard *this*, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁶ And looking at *them* Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

ILLUSTRATION:

Try to imagine someone attempting to push a camel through the eye of a sewing needle. Some have claimed the "eye of the needle" referred to a small gate in Jerusalem. The idea is that a camel would have to kneel down in order to squeeze through. Others have claimed Jesus referred to a very narrow pass. Each of these explanations assume that a camel is able to get through but with difficulty.

Historical evidence does not support, these conclusions. The Greek text refers to a real sewing needle and a real camel. Jesus' message is clear. It is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. He did not say that a rich man could enter with extreme difficulty. He said it was impossible. The disciples understood Jesus point. They answered, "Then who can be saved?" The answer reveals the common belief that entrance into heaven required the giving of alms. The giving of alms to the poor blessed the giver with righteousness. So a wealthy man could purchase a lot of righteousness. He had a great advantage over others. So they asked, ". . . who can be saved?" If any one could be saved, they believed a rich man could, but Jesus said it was impossible for them.

Then Jesus goes on to explain that MAN cannot save himself, but all things are possible with God. He is talking about spiritual birth. Rich men have difficulty seeing their need for God. Rich men think that they can buy heaven, but they must come to God as everyone else. God has made it possible for all, including the rich to be saved from the penalty of their sins.

Jesus reflects on how hard it often is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The riches are a distraction and hard to share if one is too attached to them. The disciples' reaction is that if even the rich cannot be saved, who can? But the verdict is that **even** the rich, not **only** the rich, will find it impossible to save themselves – but with God all things are possible.

Conclusion: Many who are rich do not depend on God as they should. They do not see their need for Him. Most do not become Christians. God owns everything in this world, including what He has given to the rich. So He calls on wealthy Christians to do the following:

So what does the scriptures say that a rich man is supposed to do?

I Timothy 6:17-19

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

The rich are told that God is the supplier of everything good. They are to **do** good, be generous with what God has given them and store up Godly treasure that has everlasting value.

II. How to Resist Temptation and Sin

Next James addresses how to resist temptation and sin.

A. In order to resist temptation, we must first understand what temptation is.

James states it this way:

James 1:13-18

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 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. 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.

We are born with a basic understanding of good and evil. We also read God's Word to understand what He expects from us.

These verses teach us several things about temptation and sin.

First, God does not tempt us to sin, in fact, (1 Cor. 10:13) explains that God provides us with a way out of temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but

with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

When we are tempted, don't blame God. God does not tempt us. We fall into sin due to our own desires. We must desire God and His will most. God allows us to be tempted in order to refine our faith and to help us grow in our dependence upon Him.

Second, temptation in of itself is not sin. Jesus was tempted, however, He was without sin. Temptation only becomes sin when we give into the temptation.

Adam and Eve provide a perfect illustration on how temptation can lead to sin.

ILLUSTRATION:

Temptation leading to sin is a process.

Genesis 3:1-8

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

A. Temptation starts with a harmless thought or desire that entices us to do something that we are not supposed to do.

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

B. Next the initial thought is then entertained and explored. We contemplate committing the sin.

6 the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise,

C. After entertaining the thought, we commit the act of sin to fulfill our cravings and desires.

she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

⁸ They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

After we commit sin, Satan wants us to feel so guilty that we alienate ourselves from God. And when we alienate ourselves from God, it will produce spiritual death--the type of spiritual death James talked about. Sin kills us. Christ died to save us. We will not be serving Christ well if we continue in sin. If we will not engage in the spiritual battle to avoid sin, we are not serving Christ.

If we are going to conquer temptation we must **stop** the temptation from going past the **first stage**. We are all going to have tempting thoughts and desires, however, we must not entertain those thoughts. If we do, then chances are we will commit the sin.

We must trust that what God says is sin is something that we must not do.

ILLUSTRATION:

Have you ever had a pet dog that you watched carefully to ensure that it did not run in the street. You know what the consequences could be if it continuously kept darting into the street. Sooner or later a car will be passing by and run over it. From the dog's perspective, he may be thinking, "This master of mine is overbearing. I just want to enjoy running on the asphalt. I have done it many times and there is nothing wrong with it."

We may not understand why certain "rules" are laid out for us. But God does. Trust His wisdom!

So far, we have noticed to resist temptation, we must first know what temptation is.

B. Second, to resist temptation, we must predetermine in our minds that we will not give in to the temptation of sin against God

Satan will make sin as desirable, alluring, appealing, tantalizing, or inviting as he can. We must not commit it. Nothing in this world is worth our souls.

C. Third, to resist temptation, we must rely upon the strength of God

Ephesians 6:10-11

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

ILLUSTRATION:

Sometime back, the Denver Post reported this story:

Like many sheep ranchers in the West, Lexy Lowler has tried just about everything to stop crafty coyotes from killing her sheep. She has used odor sprays, electric fences, and scare-coyotes. She has slept with her lambs during the summer and has placed battery-operated radios near them. She has corralled them at night, herded them at day. But the southern Montana rancher has lost scores of lambs—fifty last year alone.

Then she discovered the llama—the aggressive, funny-looking, afraid-of-nothing llama. “Llamas don’t appear to be afraid of anything,” she said. “When they see something, they put their head up and walk straight toward it. That is aggressive behavior as far as the coyote is concerned, and they won’t have anything to do with that. Coyotes are opportunists, and llamas take that opportunity away.”

When Satan attacks us with his devilish schemes, we must not fight him alone. We to send the llama to help. We must send God to get rid of him.

When we are tempted, we need to go immediately to God in prayer and ask Him to help us resist the urge to commit the sin.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT:

Romans 6:1-11

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁶ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,
⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again;
death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin
once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider
yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

If you have a persistent sin in your life and you already know what God wants you to do about it from your knowledge of God's Word, I encourage you to act on it now. Don't leave and think I have got to think about it some more. Trust in God's sovereignty and wisdom.

If you do not know the how to handle the problem based on your knowledge of God's Word. Keep asking, seeking, believing, and trusting in the Lord. God says He will give you the wisdom. This may require that you spend some time in God's Word or that you discuss it with fellow Christians.

Put your faith in Christ for your salvation and obey His commands. Become His bondservant. Seek His wisdom.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We are voting this week whether to accept me as your minister.
I would also like to start a Bible study. Consider what would be a good time.
Your signature is optional.

The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.