

James 1:13-18 // God's Character & Your Conduct

Good morning everyone, I'm so happy to be with you here this morning and very grateful for the opportunity from Pastor Rob to preach God's Word. My name is Jesse Slinkman and I serve as the College Pastor here at Coram Deo.

In our college ministry we have been going through the book of James. And I mean going through it rigorously. Verse by verse, word by word. By the way if you are 18-25 you need to come to college min - Centered on Christ, Committed to Discipleship and Confident in his Word. Let's grow in God's Word together...

So turn with me in your bible to James 1:13-18. If you don't have a copy of God's Word, one of our ushers can get one for you; just raise your hand.

James 1:13–18

[13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. [14] But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. [15] Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. [16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. [18] Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (ESV)

The book of James, authored by the half brother of Jesus, is all about how we live wisely. And what James wants us to see, what he makes very clear in this text, is that, in any circumstance, good and wise living comes from viewing God correctly.

So our Main Idea is: **Remember God's character and respond with Godly conduct - in any temptation or blessing.** James is so concerned with how we think about God because it impacts how we live. When you truly see God's character, it should change you. And if you don't see God for who he is, your life won't be changed. You won't see deep spiritual transformation in either temptations or blessings. If you don't behold the lord and remember him your life won't be changed.

The whole of your life is what I mean by the word conduct - the actions you take, the thoughts you have, and the way you live. Your conduct is how you live your life; in all aspects. Literally, the original meaning of the word "conduct" was "the managing of one's own life". It's how you live. Your actions and attitudes. Your conduct will be impacted in this life by how you view God's character.

I hope you noticed that this text is split up into 2 sections; the first is verses 13-15, talking about temptations. Where they come from and the dangers they present to us. The second section is verses 16-18, talking about blessings. Where they come from and the benefits they present to us.

I want you to see the parallel. These are contrasting topics - temptations and blessings, that James is pitting against each other so that we see God's character and what our conduct, what our life, should be in light of that.

So let's start with examining verses 13-15, where James presents to us a clear argument about God, people, and sin when we are...

- **In temptations - Verses 13-15**

[13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. [14] But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. [15] Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The first half of our text for today, the part we just read, is obviously about our temptations. Not just trials, like James referred to in previous verses, but temptations. When you feel the pull to sin and the will to rebel against God. When you feel those things you need to:

- **Remember God's Character:**

You have to notice how quick James is to defend God's character. James is correcting how we, as sinful humans, are inclined to think. It's almost like James can read your mind and correct your thoughts. *[13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God,"* Why not? James is establishing that God is:

- **He is completely blameless (v13a)**

James, right off the bat, wants you to know that God is never at fault. He is never to blame for the temptations that you face. When you face the option to sin, when it is right there in front of you, it is absolutely wrong to say that God is asking you or persuading you to sin. He is not culpable; not at fault in any way. God will never ever be at fault for anything you do. In all of human history, God has never tempted anyone to sin - that includes you. He is completely blameless. And James tells us why God is blameless. He gives us 2 reasons why God isn't at a fault. For one:

- **He is perfectly righteous (v13b)**

We continue in verse 13: *for God cannot be tempted with evil*. The Lord is perfectly righteous. He is without wrongdoing. Sin is completely and totally removed from him. I can think of no other way to say it. God is flawless, perfect, morally upright and correct in every way you can think of. There is not a scrap of evil in him nor is he tempted by any evil outside of him. He's perfectly righteous - correct and just in all he does. But he is also....

■ **He is unceasingly good (v13c)**

God is not tempted by evil and he never does evil. In fact, Psalm 119 tells us that he is good and does good. James affirms God's goodness when he says this in verse 13 - *he himself tempts no one*. In other words, God is good.

I tried to think of an illustration so you can see this truth clearer. Here's the best one I could think of - fishing. My dad is an avid fisher and he would take my brother and I all the time growing up. I remember he would open up his tackle box and there would be so many colorful lures and baits to attract the fish. They make the bait as shiny and glittery as possible so that the fish just can't resist. Fish must be dumb.

Good thing God's not like that. He never entices us to sin. God wants the best for us. He doesn't want us to fail. He's unceasingly good, therefore, he tempts no one. He is blameless, he is righteous, and he's good. 3 aspects of God's character from verses 13-15.

With all of that being said, you now have to take that and meld it into your life. James wants us to take that information and make it application. Seeing God's character can't just change your mind, it changes how you live. So you need to...

○ **Respond With Your Conduct:**

In 3 ways, from the text...

■ **Don't blame God (v13a)**

4 simple words. [13] *Let no one say*. I don't think any of us would say this outwardly. But we think it inwardly. Even though we know God is holy, and good, and therefore blameless, we still turn to him and put the blame on him for when we sin. For when we miss the mark of righteousness, his standard of living.

Do you find yourself thinking: "what else was I supposed to do? What else was I supposed to say? After all, I didn't choose this family. God put me here with these people. This wasn't my first choice of school. God put me here in this situation. This wasn't the job I wanted, but it's the only one that gave me an offer so I had to take it. God put me here and he is to blame!" How easily those thoughts can come.

Those thoughts reveal the same old patterns of thinking that humanity has had since the Garden. Remember, after the fall in Gen 3, Adam said to God "The woman you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate. God, you put her here. It must be your fault." Blame shifting. Since day one.

That kind of attitude, those kinds of thoughts. They blame God. Whether it's the family you are born into, the school you attend, the job you have, the relationship or marriage he gave you - yes, God put you there, but it's not him tempting you. Don't blame him for your sin. God's character rules out the possibility of him being at fault. Your sin is your fault. My sin is my fault.

When we sin, our first thought should be to look inside our own hearts. When we self-examine, when we honestly look at ourselves we find that it's not him tempting us, it's our own desires. And you need to...

■ **Resist Sinful Desires (v14)**

It's not God luring you to sin. Look at the text with me [14] *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire*. The desire to sin. The will to rebel. It resides in your desires. That word, desire, in Greek conveys the idea of a deep craving. A longing. This is more than just wishing Chick fil A was open on Sunday, ok? We're talking desire; longing. So much so that the word is translated in other passages as lust, or passion, or covetousness.

You need to resist your own desire to sin. In whatever areas of life you are tempted. I know that you know the feeling. That feeling of sin creeping into your mind. The opportunity to satisfy your cravings. Sometimes it happens so quickly. Other times it slowly presents itself and you can see it coming, but you don't fight back like you should.

You are called to resist. And you can resist. Look at 1 Cor 10:13 -. ***13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.***

It's a promise; that God will always make a way so that we can resist sinful desires. A way that we can flee and escape temptation. Look what happens if we don't....

[15] *Then desire* (the sinful inclinations of your heart) *when it has conceived* (when you give into that desire) *gives birth to sin* (that is the moment that you crossed that line and broke God's command), *and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death*. In other words, when you keep sinning over and over, you are feeding that desire. It's growing into something that will be the equivalent of death.

Here me, church. James doesn't mean that if you are struggling with sin that you aren't saved. He doesn't mean that your relationship with God is over and done. I think what he is intending to convey is that you need to...

- **Be aware of the deadly outcome (v15)**

Verse 15 *sin when it is fully grown brings forth death*. Meaning that your soul will be crushed by shame, burden, and hurt from unrepentant sin. Instead of experiencing holiness and abundant life in Christ, you will have the pangs of death and misery piercing your heart all time. Instead of the light of Christ, you'll be in the darkness of shame. Instead of the life of Christ, you'll feel the shadow of spiritual death creeping toward you. Make no mistake, unrepentant sin, the desires that you keep giving into, will turn into death. That's the outcome of living in perpetual sin.

Repent of the sins you are keeping hidden. The sins that no one knows about and you keep giving into. Time and time again they are taking away your abundant life and growing into spiritual death. Be aware that death is the outcome.

As we end these verses, I want to redirect you to - **Main Idea: Remember God's character and respond with Godly conduct - in any temptation or blessing.**

James spend time walking us through temptations, now he turns...

- **In blessings - Verses 16-18**

This is where James pivots dramatically. He again reads our minds and redirects our thinking. After talking about God's holiness and our temptations he says: *[16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. [18] Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (ESV)*

- **Remember God's Character:**

After James fundamentally denies that God is the tempter, he wholeheartedly affirms who God truly is. First...

- **He is the giver (v17a)**

It's just that simple. God is the giver. *[17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above*. If there is a gift given, there must be a gift giver. — It's God. He's not a tempter. He is not a taker. He is a giver. Every good thing is in his hand. Every beautiful gift that we could receive is from him. It's his nature to give.

Part of the way that he shows love is by giving us gifts. Anything you can imagine - anything in your life that is good is from God. Salvation, friendships, your life, your family, the Holy spirit in you, a new day of mercy, your emotions, your home, your job, our church - it's all from the Lord. He is the gift giver. Praise God that is who he is. And he is also...

- **He is the father (v17b)**

coming down from the Father of lights Not only is he your heavenly father (although he is), James means this in a broader sense. He means it in the sense of God's providence and his care of all the world. The lights here, refer to the sun, moon and stars. The universe. God is the Father, the creator, over all of these things. He is able to provide us with good and perfect gifts, because he is in charge of all of it - of everything. He's the father. What does a father do? He cares for all he has made

And I love the next contrast that James presents to us.

the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

That's the truth...

- **He does not change (v17c)**

Here is how one commentary put it:

Indeed, it is God who created the "lights" (sun, moon, stars). Yet, unlike such created heavenly bodies, which wax, wane, and move through the heavens (with "variation or shadow due to change"), God himself is completely reliable and unwavering in his benevolent disposition. (ESV Expository Commentary)

His character, that thing we keep talking about, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will never be any less holy. Never any less kind. Never any less God.

And just like in the temptations from earlier, even in blessings, especially in blessings:

- **Respond With Your Conduct:**

God never changes. But our lives should change and be different when we behold his character. When we rightly see him for who he is. Our conduct is changed when we see his unchanging character. And James tells us...

- **Don't be deceived (v16)**

[16] *Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.* Our desire, our sin, and the world will try to deceive us. All of these things try to tell us who God is - that he tempts us. However, we know that God has already told us who he is. We don't have to wonder. We don't have to be deceived. God has told us who he is.

The Scriptures, God's very Word to us, has the truth about who he is. When you fill yourself with God's Word, when you are invested in it - you not only draw near to God, but you are also guarding yourself against deception. Remember that our tendency is to blame God for our temptations. James encourages us to stand strong against that deception by remembering who God truly is. Don't be deceived.

Look with me at verse 18. [18] *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* (ESV)

That phrase "brought us forth" doesn't only mean when God created you or the fact that you are alive. It refers to your salvation. It means regeneration. The new spiritual life that you have in Jesus. He redeemed us. He saved us. He did the work when we could not. From death to life. He brought us forth. The simple application is that we should...

■ **Serve him (v18)**

He redeemed us and saved us from the consequences of our own sin. He freed us from the punishment of hell that we deserved. Jesus paid the ultimate price and therefore he receives our infinite service.

Being a servant, at its most basic understanding, means that we are at the beck and call of the master. Do you know what I mean by that? What the master says goes, and we don't argue. If he says go, we go. If he says do, we do. If he says stop, we stop. He brought us forth, so we serve him.

Do you have the inclination? Are you wanting to do what he says? Do you give him your all and your everything? Or are you serving yourself? So wrapped up in sin, and temptations, and desire that you don't care about what God wants anymore.

Whatever the master says, obey. That is our joyful obligation to him for all that he has done. He's in charge, not us. He is the master, we are the servants. He brought us forth. As we serve him, we are also to...

■ **Bless him (v18)**

verse 18 says *that we should be a kind of firstfruits*

Firstfruits. It's an Old Testament way of describing a specially selected offering to God. Something that was pleasing to him. Something that brought him praise. Something that was chosen as an act of pure and total worship to bless him. In the Old Covenant, the firstfruits was an actual object. It was your grain or your fruit, or your pigeons, or your cattle. But it was also worship.

In the New Covenant, we are the offering. We are the firstfruits. We are the ones who have a call and desire to bring him praise with our whole lives. Out of all his creatures, out of all of his creation, the Church is called to verbalize his praise. To increase his worship. To testify to his majesty and bless his name every chance we get. Psalm 34 - I will bless the Lord at all times. We bless him corporately and individually.

I hope that you love gathering together every week to worship. To sing and exalt the only one who is worthy. And I pray that worship overflows throughout your week. That you bless God from whom all blessings flow. That your whole life is a song and a symphony to God. To bless him every chance you get. No matter where you are or what season of life. Bless him.

Outro

In any season of life, responding with Godly conduct is only going to happen, when you see his character, like James wants you to. When you see him as the giver and the father, you can't help but serve him and bless him. When you behold God your life will be changed. When you see his righteousness and goodness, you can't stay the same, and you don't want to stay the same. Because we: **Remember God's character and respond with Godly conduct - in any temptation or blessing**

The Christian life is about rightly seeing God's character, his holiness and goodness and responding in our conduct. By resisting sinful temptations and worshipping him in the blessings. Worshipping the one from whom all blessing flows.

Pray

Lord, I pray that you transform us today. Transform us from the inside out. Change us from within because we behold you for who you are. Righteous, good, giving, unchanging. The God from whom all blessing flows. And so we bless your name.