

JAMES: FAITH WORKS / RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OVERALLS #7
“The Truth About Temptation” Part 2 (James 1:15-18)
 Mission Bible Fellowship (September 22, 2019) Pastor Larry Nelson

Introduction:

1. Please open your Bibles this morning to *James Chapter 1*, where we have come to the 7th message in a verse-by-verse study, which I have called, “**FAITH WORKS**, or, **RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OVERALLS**”, where we are learning about a “**BELIEF** that **BEHAVES**.”
2. As we consider the ☞ **GREEN CUP** ☞, from previous Sundays, you will remember the simple truth that when it gets **bumped**, whatever is on the inside, sloshes to the outside.
 - a. And so it is with every person on earth, when the trials of life “**bump**” us, whatever we **really** are on the inside, sloshes to the outside.
 - b. So, please allow me to ask this question again, When you got bumped last week, what sloshed out?
 - c. Was it God-glorifying, Love, Joy, Faith, the Giving of Thanks, the Heart of Forgiveness, and the Doing of Good?, **or**
 - d. Was it the *DRA (the Dirty Rotten Attitude)* of bitterness, frustration, hurt feelings, anger, and harsh words?

1 Peter 1:6-7

6 *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various **trials**, (OR **BUMPS**)*

7 *so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by **fire**, (OR **BUMPS**) may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

e. And the “... *whatever you do ...*,” includes getting “**bumped!!**”

3. As I have explained before, “*to glorify God*”, means to praise, honor, and to “*make Him large*.”, (especially when we are getting **BUMPED** by the unexpected Circumstance and People Problems of life.)
 - a. Just like a telescope enables us to see the magnificence of God’s created universe more clearly, even so, Christians are to be God’s telescopes, which enable others can see **Him** more clearly.
 - b. Please remember that you are the only Bible that most unbelievers are reading!, and they especially take notice when you get **BUMPED!**

*Matthew 5:16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify** your Father who is in heaven.”*

- c. Now since we live in cursed bodies, in a cursed world, trials and temptations are the normal bumps that all of us experience every day.

<TRANS> So last time we were together, I began a two-part message, beginning in *James 1:13*, which I have entitled: “*The Truth About Temptation.*”

4. During that message, I only touched on *Matthew 4* and *Luke 4*, where we read about Jesus being tempted by the devil.

a. And then I read these encouraging words from:

Hebrews 4:15-16

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.*

16 *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

b. So this morning, I want to preface our study in *James* with one more encouraging thought from this *Hebrews 4* text, and that is: “***It is not sin to be tempted.***” <REPEAT>

c. Jesus was “... *tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*”

d. Now because of the fallen nature of our sinful flesh, there can be all kinds and sizes of awful thoughts that come into our minds.

i. But these thoughts, in themselves, are not necessarily sin.

ii. Here is your “*Nelsonism*” for the day: “*You may not be able to keep a crow from landing on your head, but you can keep it from making a nest there!!*” <REPEAT>

iii. When an evil thought or temptation comes into our mind, this is not necessarily sin.

iv. This is just the crow of our sinful flesh landing on our head.

v. And as we will see later, the actual sin does not begin until we start to dwell and marinate on those thoughts, which will then produce ever worsening sinful thoughts and actions.

vi. For example, when a child is tempted to take a cookie without permission, he can say to himself, “*No, that is wrong,*” as he chooses to walk away, without sinning.

e. Listen to Jesus’ warning:

Matthew 5:27-28

27 *You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’;*

28 *but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

f. For men, there will be times when we cannot avoid noticing a woman who is not dressed appropriately.

i. Jesus’ warning is not the noticing, followed by looking away.

ii. It is the dwelling and imagining and marinating, where we allow these thoughts to “*make a nest*”, that becomes the sin.

- iii. When the crow of lust lands on our head, we need to remember and obey Paul's admonition in: *2 Corinthians 10:5*

2 Corinthians 10:5 "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

<TRANS> Last time we were together I began a two-part message, which I entitled, "The Truth About **Temptation**," where we covered the first 3 points in my sermon outline:

- I. THE SINFULNESS OF MAN (James 1:13a)
- II. THE HOLINESS OF GOD (1:13b)
- III. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN (:14)

<TRANS> So please take out your sermon outlines, as we move right into the last 3 points, which begin with:

IV. THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF SIN (:15), But first let's read the entire text again.

James 1:13-18

- 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.*

- A. Starting in verse 15 in our text, James changes his metaphors from the luring and temptation of baited traps and hooks, to illustrating his point with the progress of child birth.

James 1:15 *Then, when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

1. Just like there are 3 stages to the birth process, which are conception, growth in the womb, and finally birth, so there are 3 stages in the process of sin, where desire becomes a sinful lust, and as lust grows in the heart, there is a worsening of sinful thoughts, which eventually become sinful actions.
- B. Now if you will remember from Point #2, THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN, I talked about how even our Lord's most wonderful gifts, can be twisted into an idolatrous sinful craving.
 1. Food, shelter, sleep, marriage, reputation, clothing, and the joys of marital love, just to name a few, can all become, "*Idols of the heart*," which we read about in *Ezekiel 14:1-8*.
 2. And it was here that I shared the "***The Three Tests of Idolatry***."
 3. In other words, "*How can I know when even a **good thing** has become an idol of the heart?*"

- (1) I am willing to sin in order to get it.
- (2) I am willing to sin if I don't get it., and finally,
- (3) I am willing to sin in order to keep what I already have.

4. If any one, or all three of these are true in our lives, then we are committing the sin of idolatry in our hearts.
 - a. And can you guess which idol we are actually worshiping?
 - b. Since the idol is of our own making, in our own heart, then we are actually worshiping ourselves.
 - c. Simply put, the root of all sin is **idolatry** in our own heart.

C. So as we continue with James' childbirth analogy, he says again in *James 1:15*

James 1:15 "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

1. According to this and other texts of scripture, sin results in death.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death ..."

2. Even as death separates the soul from the body, it ultimately separates the sinner from God for all eternity.
3. Simply put, the end of the sinner's idolatrous worshiping of self, is death and Hell.
4. But fortunately for us, *Romans 6:23* does not end there:

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, **but** the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. As Jesus died on that cross, He was paying the price for my sin, which I could not have paid in a thousand lifetimes.
6. And all who come to Him, in repentant faith will be forgiven, and adopted into the forever family of God.

TRANS> Which brings us to Point #5 in our sermon outline:

V. THE DEPENDABLENESS OF GOD (:16-17)

James 1:16-17

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.

- A. As I said last time, **IDOLS LIE**, which simply means that the idols of our heart make promises that they can't keep.
 1. While they promise satisfaction, they actually deliver only heartache and death.

B. And so James warns us, don't let your wicked idolatrous heart deceive you into believing that this sin is actually OK.

1. He declares that all good gifts come down from God, who is the "*Father of lights.*"
2. Notice how the Apostle John develops this same truth in:

1 John 1:5-6

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**.*

6 *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;*

3. All of you have heard, and many of you have memorized:

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

4. But it may have been awhile since you have studied the context:

John 3:18-20

18 *He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

19 *This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.*

20 *For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

5. And God declared through the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 5:20-21

20 *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

21 *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!*

2 Timothy 3:13 *But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, **deceiving** and being **deceived**.*

C. False teachers, and the sinfulness of our own idolatrous hearts will try to convince us that, darkness is actually light, and that evil is actually good, and bitter is actually sweet, where somehow in the moment of temptation, God changes His mind, just for us.

1. But James warns us, "**Do not be deceived**", because all of God's gifts and God's ways are easy to recognize, because they are always filled with the purpose of glorifying God in the light.
2. Unlike the deceivers of this world, and the lying idols in our own depraved hearts, James 1:17 declares God to be, the "*Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*"
3. None of God's gifts ever need to be twisted or contorted, or only viewed in the dark shadows, so that they **appear** to be good.

TRANS> Now let's move on to Point #6 in my Sermon Outline:

VI. THE PURPOSEFULNESS OF TESTING (:18)

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.

- A. As we come to the last verse in this section, I would draw your attention to some questions that most of us have asked:
1. *"Since our God is all loving and omnipotent, why does He allow testing and temptation to come into our lives?" OR,*
 2. *"Why did He put the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" into the Garden of Eden, knowing what Adam and Eve would do?"*
 3. Or, *"Why did God create us with the ability to sin in the first place?"* Or finally,
 4. *"Why not create us so that it would be impossible to sin?"*
- B. In all of creation, only mankind was created in the image of God.
1. Each species of bird and bees build their own kind of nest from inborn instinct.
 2. But mankind was created with the ability to study and to learn.
 3. Human beings can design and build bridges, and vehicles, and airplanes to move us from place to place in comfort and safety.
 4. Human beings are capable of writing magnificent scores of music, to express our love for God, and for one another.
 5. But animals do not have the slightest thought of self-awareness.
 - a. They do not ponder the created universe, nor do they ask questions about God and His will for their lives.
 - b. They have no ability to commune with their Creator, and they have no thoughts about life and death, or their purpose for living.
 - c. God preprogramed the animal kingdom to live, procreate, and die in the sphere of their existence, and then they cease to be.
 6. But mankind is created with an eternal soul, where the single purpose for our existence is to love and glorify God.
 - a. God could have preprogramed us to be like computers or robots, but even though we receive great benefit from our smart phones and computers, we cannot have fellowship with them, and they cannot love us.
 - b. ☺☺☺ In fact, I think there are some days when my smart phone and computer actually hates me!

- c. But even though our Creator gave Adam and Eve the ability to love and obey Him, they chose not to.
- d. And as Adam sinned, he plunged the entire human race into death, sin and rebellion against God.
- e. Please listen carefully, as I read from *Romans 3*, where Paul describes the entirety of the fallen human race, as he references several O.T. passages, beginning with *Psalm 14:1-3*.

Romans 3:10-18

10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
 13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"
 "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
 14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";
 15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
 16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
 17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."
 18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

- f. Simply put, were it not for God, sovereignly moving on our behalf, not a single one of us would have ever searched for God on our own.
- g. So with this as a background, let's look again to our *James 1:18* text.

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.

Ephesians 2:1-3

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

- 7. Let's take a moment and have Scotty beam us over to the morgue.
 - a. And here's Bob, who looks pretty good, Bob even smells good.
 - b. But Bob has one basic problem; Bob is DEAD!
 - c. Bob has no ability to want or to choose anything, because he is, DEAD!
- 8. And according to Paul, even though we are alive **physically**, we were all born **spiritually dead**.
- 9. Starting with Adam and Eve's first born son, every baby from that day to this, has been born spiritually dead, meaning that all of us were born without the Holy Spirit living within us.

10. But thank the Lord, that Paul does not stop with *Ephesians 2:3*.

Ephesians 2:4-7

4 **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

11. And this is why Jesus said to Nicodemus in *John 3:7*, "... you **must** be born again."

12. Simply put, this is the long explanation of what James says in:

James 1:18 "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth ..."

13. In short, God did what we **could not do!**

- a. Remember, dead people have no ability to choose steak or salad or desert, because they are, **DEAD!**
- b. And in the same way, no one can choose God on his own.
- c. So were it not for His sovereign work in us, we would have all remained without God, and without Christ, and without hope, and like animals, we would not have even cared!

James 1:18 "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth ..."

d. And for all of you Greek students out there, this phrase,

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"In the exercise of His will", is <boo - lom - mi>, which is an emphatic aorist passive participle, which simply means that God did this, by His own unaided volition.

e. Listen to:

John 1:12

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
 13 who were born, (meaning "born again by the Holy Spirit"), not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God**.

Ephesians 1:4-5

4 ... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love
 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.

C. And what was it that God used to accomplish His magnificent and sovereign work of regeneration?

James 1:18 "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth ..."

1. *Romans 10:17* declares to us that: "... *faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*"
2. Which means that no one can believe, or come to repentant saving faith in Christ, apart from the written Word of God.

D. So finally this morning, let's answer the questions: "*Why did God save us?*", and "*What was His purpose?*"

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.*

E. God commanded His people in the O.T. to bring the "*first fruits*" of their harvest to the priests, who served God in the Tabernacle.

1. These "*first fruits*" represented the best of the harvest, which were indications of what was yet to come.
2. So, what is the purpose of God's allowing testing and temptations to come into our lives?
3. Among all the peoples of the world, God wants Christians to be stellar examples of His love, grace, and power.
4. Remember: **Our God never wastes suffering!**
5. And so, when we suffer the trials and temptations of life, our Master always has a God-honoring purpose in mind.
6. And that purpose is for us to give Him glory.

Conclusion:

1. So, for these last two sermons, we have studied "*The Truth About Temptation.*"
2. It is my prayer that this has been both enlightening and encouraging to all of you.
3. And because I know that I usually talk way faster than you can take notes, the sermon audio and written transcripts will soon be available at:
www.kootenaichurch.org/nelson
4. Or you can send your request to askpastornelson@gmail.com, and I will get it right out to you.
5. So let's pray together.