

James - The Source of Temptation

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Date: 06 September 2026

Preacher: Christopher Baker

[0:00] Alright, this morning if you have your Bibles, we are in the book of James. We have been in James for a few weeks now. And I have already enjoyed as we've been doing our walk through the book of James.

And again, James is one of those books of the Bible that, you know, in the Old Testament we have Proverbs that you think of as a book of wisdom. It is full of just good solid advice for how to live your life in a godly way.

Practical things that you can put into play in your life. James is often called the Proverbs of the New Testament. It is just one of these solid where the rubber meets the road kind of books that describe some things in our lives of how we should live and how we should understand things as believers. So we've looked at a few different things in James and we're going to move on. And we're going to start today in James chapter 1 verse 12. And we're going to share 12 down through 16 to start with. So I'm going to ask for you to follow along in the Bible. Hopefully you brought one. And I'm going to ask if you're able if you would stand as we read God's Word this morning together. James chapter 1 beginning in verse 12.

[1:10] And this is what God's Word shares. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation. For when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Let's pray this morning.

Lord God, thank you again for your presence in this place. I thank you for the family that you have brought together here this morning. And Lord, we thank you for your Word that we can read it and understand that it is the truth.

Lord, so many things in this world we look at and we don't know whether to believe them or not. We don't know whether it is real, whether it is fake, whether it is true, whether it is lies. But Lord, as we look at your Word, we can know that it is your Word, that it is the truth, that it always has been and always will be.

[2:20] And I pray, Lord, this morning as we look at it that you would just open our eyes and our hearts to it. That you would help us to understand the things that you want us to understand. And more than that, help us to apply these things in our own lives.

So just work in our hearts today, Lord, and help our hearts to be soft so that you can work in them. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. You can be seated this morning.

So, these verses start off with something that I got a question just to start us off this morning. It said, blessed is the man. Let's just stop right there. It would mean man, woman.

It's talking about people in general. Do you want to be blessed? Anybody in here not want to be blessed? You woke up this morning and say, I don't want any blessings in my life. I've got enough of them.

I'm full of blessings. Don't need any more. Do we ever have that? No. We want to be blessed. So, if we want to be blessed, there are ways that God's Word makes pretty evident that if you want to be blessed, then this is something you need to do in your life.

[3:23] Here it starts off, blessed is the man or the woman. Blessed is the person. But then we maybe want to skip the last part of this verse. Because why? Because sometimes it's hard.

Blessed is a man that does what? Endureth temptation. What is temptation? Let's talk definitions here for a minute.

What is temptation? How would you describe temptation? Anything outside of God's Word. All right. Sin. Stuff that's not good for us. All these are absolutely true. It begins with a thought to do something against God's will.

Okay. It begins with a thought to do something against God's will. You know, we use that word temptation a lot, but not often do we stop and think, what is temptation? What does that really mean?

[4:23] And I think the things you've said are all true. But it's the beginning of a desire to do something that is against God's Word. That's what a temptation is. Excuse me. Something that is put out there that is against God's Word that somebody is trying to get you to do.

That is temptation. And He said, blessed is the man that endureth temptation. That word endure is kind of an interesting word too.

What does it mean to endure? Endure. To stand strong. To get through. And you think of the word endure. What kind of things do you think of when you hear the word to endure something?

It's generally something that's hard or uncomfortable, isn't it? You might endure pain. Well, is pain something that's hard? Yes. Is pain something that's uncomfortable?

Yes. You might talk about a race that you run. When you're running, is it tiring? Yes. Is it hard? Yes. But you want to and need to endure. You never talk about enduring something that is pleasant and comfortable, do you?

[5:32] No. Do you? Think about it for a minute. Do you ever talk about enduring something that is pleasant or comfortable? No. Boy, that piece of pie looks really good. I'm going to endure eating it.

That recliner looks really comfortable this afternoon. I'm going to have to endure the time I spend sitting down in that recliner. The two things don't go together, do they? No. When you hear the word endure, it means that there is something challenging or something difficult that regardless of the fact that it's challenging or difficult, you need to get through it.

That is what enduring is all about. And it said, blessed is the man that endures temptation. That means gets through the temptation when it comes. And this is telling us that this is not going to be an easy thing.

Enduring is not easy. It is hard. But if we are able to do that, we're blessed. So some of the facts that we need to realize about temptation, the first fact that we need to realize is it's not easy.

It's hard. That's why it says we have to endure it. Second thing we have to realize about temptation, look in verse 13. Let no man say when he is tempted.

[6:48] Let's stop there for a minute. There's a word in there I want us to focus on. And that word is this W word right up here. What is the word? When.

Why do you think it uses the word when? Why do you think it doesn't say, let no man say if he's tempted. It doesn't say that, does it?

Does he use if, he uses when. Why is that? It is going to happen. It doesn't matter how faithful we are.

It doesn't matter how strong a Christian we are. It doesn't matter where we live. It doesn't matter our age. It doesn't matter whether we're a man, a woman, a child, an elderly, everything in between.

It doesn't matter your level of intelligence. It doesn't matter your level of education. Here is the reality. You are going to be tempted. As a Christian and as a believer, it will happen. Sometimes we have the mistaken belief that if I am just holy enough that I am never going to be tempted.

[7:52] Does it work that way? No. It says when you are tempted. And you know the example that I am so often reminded of. You know, Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

And He came to this earth voluntarily to spend life as a human being, as a man on this earth, to give His life for us, to die on the cross, to raise again so that we could have forgiveness and everlasting life. All right?

That's what the Bible says. But when He came to this earth as a man, He was still the Son of God. Right? Right? What was one of the first things as He began His ministry here on this earth, what is one of the first things the Bible says that He experienced?

When He was in the wilderness. You remember that? He was tempted. When He was tempted, who came to Him? Satan.

The devil. The devil is real, folks. Don't think it's just some imaginary, and I know I've already seen Halloween decorations around, which I don't understand. That's another whole thing. But don't think that because we think about the devil on Halloween that he's some character that's made up.

[8:59] Folks, the devil's real. Period. The Bible talks about it. It's an angel falling from heaven. Lucifer. Where was I going with that? Oh, yeah. Satan came and tempted Jesus Christ after he had spent 40 days in the wilderness.

He came and was bold enough. Did Satan know that Jesus was the Son of God? Absolutely. He knew that it was the Son of God, and yet Satan was still bold enough to come and tempt Him, wasn't he?

Tempted Him three times, remember? What were the three temptations that he tempted Him with? Really test your memory this morning. And we're not going to read it, so it's up to you. Turn the bread into stone.

Turn the bread into stone. Jump off the temple. The angels will bear you up. Worship me and I'll give you everything.

Worship me and I'll give you everything. All the kingdoms of the world. So he tempted Jesus with all these things, who was the Son of God. Satan was bold enough that he tempted Jesus Christ. So how do we ever think that we're going to be holy enough that we're never going to be tempted?

[10:13] If Satan was bold enough to tempt Jesus, do you think he's going to be bold enough to tempt you? I'm sorry, you're not on the same level with Jesus. So if he's tempting Jesus, then yeah, we're going to be tempted.

Every one of us are going to be tempted. It is unavoidable. Again, it doesn't matter. All those things I mentioned earlier, temptation will come. And really, we understand that, don't we? How many of you have faced temptation in your life?

Raise your hand. How many of you have faced temptation this past week? How many of you have faced temptation this morning? But why then don't we talk about it?

How often do we talk about it? I'm really asking this. I don't know. I wasn't planning on going here, but I think this is important. How often do we talk about our temptations?

Most people don't. We don't want to. Most of the time we don't. Why? Because they want to hire. Pride. Pride? What else?

[11:18] Think of it as a weakness. We think of it as a weakness. Fear. Fear. Fear. Don't want to admit our failure. Don't want to admit our failure?

Yeah. You know, I think this is, and this is just my opinion. This is just Pastor Chris talking. I really think this is one area where, as a church, I'm not talking just a church at Bethel, but I think a church in general, where we fall short quite often.

In being honest with each other and being honest with God about how often we're tempted and about how we deal with those temptations. Because we already talked, the reality is we all raised our hands that we face temptation.

We all raised our hands that we face temptation just this past week, maybe this past day, maybe this past hour. And folks, temptations come in so many different forms, don't they? They can be temptations to all kinds of things that are bad for us, pornography, alcohol, drugs, all kinds of temptations that can come.

What other kind of temptations can we face? Well, with our priorities, to put money number one over other things, priority of how we spend our time, we can be tempted to spend it wrong. We can be tempted to respond to somebody with anger, to yell at someone, whether it's our spouse, our children, out of anger, to say things that we shouldn't say.

[12:33] Okay, we can be tempted to be envious of what other people have. We can be tempted to have grudges and hold grudges against people. Have I covered anything you deal with yet? We can be tempted to lie or be dishonest or stretch the truth or tell white lies, we like to call them, because it makes us feel better.

Have I had a temptation that you've dealt with in your life? We can have temptations to be prideful and think we can do it on our own or we accomplished it on our own and not to give God the credit that He deserves.

Is there anybody I haven't hit yet? Anybody's toes who haven't been stepped on? I just stomped on mine pretty good several times. But we all have these. Why don't we admit that to each other?

I mean, how often do our conversations really entail, wow, I was really tempted this week, I need you to pray for me about this or about that? We don't because we're afraid people will think less of us.

That they'll think, oh, they were tempted with that. Folks, they're not going to think that because most likely they probably were too. And we need to be praying with each other and for each other because temptations are something we all face.

[13:41] So I hope as a church, and I'm talking now specifically about Bethel, about our church here, about our family here. I hope that we are honest with each other. You know, I think in a family, and I'm talking like parents and children, one of the greatest things that can happen in a family is that they love each other and that they're honest with each other.

And the same thing is true for a church family, that we are honest with each other, that we're open with each other, that we're praying with each other, that we're not judging but loving and coming alongside each other as we go through struggles, as we go through trials, as we go through temptations.

Folks, that is what God wants His church to be. So as we're talking about temptations this morning, that's what we're talking about, things that we all face, things that we all deal with. They are unavoidable.

They will happen. That's why it says when and not if. So why does temptation come? Why do we have to deal with it? Where does it come from? Well, the Bible gives us a clue here.

And first thing we have to understand is it doesn't come from God. Look at what it says in verse 14. Now, 13 verse. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.

[14:50] For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. You know what? Sometimes when we're tempted, do you know who the easiest person is to blame? God. It's easy to blame God.

He's in control, right? Right? He's on the throne. So it must be His fault when we face all these temptations.

Well, why did God allow me to go through that? Why did God allow me to face this temptation? It's easy to blame God, isn't it? Isn't it always easy to blame the one that's in charge of everything?

I mean, not just God, but in general in life. But the Bible makes it very clear that God is not the one to be blamed. That God does not tempt us.

That temptation does not come from God. If it doesn't come from God, where does it come from?

And it's easy to say, as in the example with Christ, well, it's the devil's fault.

[15:47] It's all the devil's fault, right? The devil made me do it. You ever heard that? We've heard that expression, right? The devil made me do it. Can the devil make you do anything?

The devil can't make us do anything, folks. So saying the devil made me do it, folks, that is not a biblical thing. The devil can influence, but he's not going to make you do anything.

But it shares here where temptation does come from. And here's the reason why temptation is unavoidable, why we can't stay away from it, why we can't get away from it.

Do you know why? Because it comes from us. It comes from inside. Look at what it says in verse 14. But every man is tempted.

Again, all of us are when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. So where does that temptation, where does that lust come from?

[16:54] It comes from inside us. So the only way that Pastor Chris can get away from temptation, the only way I can do that is for me to get away from myself. That sounds silly because we can't get away from ourselves, can we?

We can't. That is why temptation is unavoidable. That is why we could sequester ourselves. We could get away from everybody else on a deserted island where there's nobody else around, no televisions, no movies, no magazines, no social media, no cell phones.

We could isolate ourselves from all those things, and you know what would still be there?

Temptation. Why? Because you're there.

You can't get away from it because it comes from within. Well, that's discouraging, isn't it? So I can't escape it. Wherever I go, I can't escape it.

That is true. But it's not hopeless. We've talked about how in James, often James will bring up a topic in chapter 1. And then later on in the book of James, it will expound on it.

[18:07] It will explain that. So I want you to look in James chapter 4. So turn back just a few pages. Because it talks more about temptation and lust. And really, lust is the source of temptation. It's our own desires. James chapter 4, beginning in the first verse. Follow along. And we're just going to read the first seven verses. It says, All right.

So here he's talking more about lust. He's talking more about our own desires and the temptations that come about as a result. And he starts with saying, From where come wars and fighting among you?

When you think about it, does our world have any conflicts going on? Any wars going on? Okay. Has there been a time in history that you can think of where there aren't any wars or conflicts going on?

No. No. There's not. At some point in the world, there's always somebody upset with somebody else and going to war over it. Isn't that true? Yep. But when it talks about wars, it doesn't just talk about wars.

[20:01] It also talks about conflict, doesn't it? And here we're not talking about maybe some war going on across on the other side of the globe. What about conflict? How often do conflicts happen around us?

In the world that we live in, in the nation that we live in, in the community that we live in, in the families that we live in, in the churches that we go to, how often is there conflict? It happens, doesn't it?

Doesn't it? But conflict never happens in the church. That's only outside the church. Never happens with church folks. That's not true, is it? Conflict happens in the church, doesn't it?

Doesn't it? Why? Because it's made of people. And those temptations come right along with it. You know, there are some people that say, well, I'm never going to go to church.

The church is just full of hypocrites. You've heard that, right? Well, yeah, they're right. It is. Isn't it? Why? Because we're here.

[21:02] And we're not perfect. And we fail. And we have these temptations. And we have these challenges. And that is just who we are. There cannot be a perfect church, because the only perfect church would be an empty one.

Because as we come in, what do we bring in with us? All of our challenges, all of our temptations, all of our failures, all of our struggles. That is just part of who we are. Conflicts come.

Conflicts come. And wars come. But it tells us where they come from, even of your lust that wars in your members. And in verse 2, you lust and you have not.

You desire to have and you cannot obtain. You know, all these things, do you know it really stems from that one phrase, you desire to have? Isn't that all about lust and temptation?

All comes from that phrase, you desire to have. What is it you desire to have that leads to temptation? What are the things you desire to have that lead to temptation?

[22:03] I got a whole list I wrote down. More? More sums it up pretty well. Desire to have wealth.

Desire to have pleasure. Desire to have power. Desire to have influence. Desire to have fame. How many of those things are present in our world? How many of those things are sometimes present in our lives?

We desire to have. That's part of our human experience. We desire to have. And sometimes the things we desire to have are not good for us, are they? Somebody said earlier that temptations are things that are not good for us because they're against God's words.

That is the truth. And we would think, well, they would be easy to avoid if they're not good for us.

But is that the truth? You know, I have weaknesses just like everybody else.

You know what I like that's not good for me? Cookies. Okay. Okay. So that one's pretty evident. I mean, just simple things. I mean, I eat so much sugar in my life and sweets.

[23:16] Why? Because I like it. I desire it. I want it. And I want more of it. I was drinking. I was ordering some sweet tea just last night. And I asked the waitress, you got sweet tea?

And she said, yes. And you know what I said? How sweet is it? I like mine where it's more of a syrup with all the sugar in it. It just kind of oozes out like maple syrup.

That's the kind of sweet tea. Okay. Is that good for me? No. No. No. Of course not. Do I want it? Do I desire it? Yes. But here's the thing. All those things that we're tempted with, they're the exact same as that.

We want it because it gives us pleasure. It makes us feel good. We think of the fame that it's going to make us the people that we want to be. All these things we desire to have. That is where that lust comes from.

Those are the things that cause us to go astray. The things that Satan tempted Jesus with. Hey, this power that I can give you would have been a desire to have.

[24 : 18] Jesus had been alone in the wilderness 40 days without eating. What do you think he was? Hungry. So Satan said, just turn that stone into bread. Desire to have food. This desire to have is what it's all about.

That's where lust comes from. But the things that we desire to have that result in temptation are things that are not good for us. And the Bible says in chapter 4 verse 3, You ask and you receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it upon your lusts.

You know, that's talking about even prayer for a believer. Sometimes we can pray for the wrong things, can't we? Can't we? We can pray to be wealthy. Is that necessarily good for us?

Is God going to give us something that's not good for us? God wants us to have things that are good for us. And so he doesn't want us to ask amiss. He doesn't want us to ask for things just to consume it for ourselves because we desire to have.

God wants us to desire him. That's what he wants. But all these things are talking about the temptations that we have and that we deal with. But the hope that we find, I told you it's not hopeless.

[25 : 30] Because God always gives us a solution. And the real key is in verse 7, the last verse that we read. And it's not complicated. It's not hard. There's two things that God says to do to deal with temptation.

We've already talked about we're all going to be tempted. There's no way to get away from it. It's going to happen. So it's pretty important we understand how to deal with temptation when it comes. The first thing in verse 7, submit yourselves therefore to God.

What does that mean to submit to God? Admit that you need him. To want what he wants for us, not what we want for ourselves.

Any other thoughts? Be willing to follow him and not our own way. I heard somebody else. Daily dying to our selfish desires and living for God.

Submitting to God. Folks, this is the key. That's why it lists this verse. Submit to God. If you don't do that first, you're not going to overcome temptation. You need to submit to God to say, Alright God, it's about what you want, not what I desire.

[26 : 43] It is about what you want in my life, not just what I want to have in my life, or what I want to accomplish. It is not about me, it is about you. That is not, I told you in the book of James, this stuff isn't easy.

Is it easy to give up our own desires and say, God, what you want in my life, not what I want? Is that an easy thing to do? Are the things that God wants in our lives always the same thing that we want for ourselves?

No. They're not. God often asks us to do things that are difficult. I have always said, I love living in the country. I can't imagine living in a big city. What if God were to say, Chris, I want you to move to New York City and be a minister there.

I ask myself this, I mean, God has not said that to me, and I praise God for that.

But if God did, you know, it's those kind of things we need to think about, then it's our desire versus God. My desire would be saying, there is no way, I am not going to live there.

[27 : 54] I have no desire to live there. That is not what I want. But if God's saying, that's what I want for you, whose desire wins out? That is submitting to God. Not in the easy things, but in all things.

Whether they're things we want or not, it's about God's will for our lives, not ours. Submit to God. Be willing to do things His way. And what God says is right and wrong, guess what?

That's right and wrong. Your opinion? Yeah. It's God's opinion that counts, not ours. God knows what is best, not you and I.

Submit to God. So that is the number one thing it says to do. Submit to God. And then do what? Resist the devil.

Resist that temptation. Fight against that desire to have whatever it is that's tempting you. Fight against that. But if you don't submit to God first, you know what happens when you fight against

that?

[28:51] You're going to lose. You have to submit to God first and say, Lord, I just give it to you. It's what you want, not what I want. It's your strength, not mine. I need you to help me with this.

It's all about you. Submit to Him. And then go about fighting that temptation and resisting the devil. And when we do it in that order, and do it the way God says, what is the result that it says will happen?

It says He will flee from you. Satan, that temptation, that desire, it's going to flee from you. What does that mean?

It'll flee from you. No, think about that word flee. What does that mean? If someone is, we use that word often, someone's fleeing from the scene of a crime, right?

Does that mean they're, oh, I should probably get out of here. The cops are going to be here soon. That's not fleeing, is it? What is fleeing? It means they're running.

[29:51] They're getting out of there quickly. It says when we do that, submit to God, rely on His strength, His power, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. He's going to run away. That's the result.

That's overcoming temptation. That is enduring temptation. And when we do that, first verse we read today, blessed is the man that endures temptation.

Does this mean you're never going to fail? You're going to overcome every temptation that comes from now on the rest of your life. No, we're going to fail at times. And that's when we need to be thankful.

Our God is a forgiving and patient God, and He loves us. But folks, His desire is that we overcome temptation. You will be tempted. Be willing to share those temptations with other people.

Be willing to admit, hey, I had a rough week. I was tempted this week. Admit that to each other. And when somebody admits that to you, don't judge them for that. You say, oh, let me pray with you about that.

[30:51] I sometimes struggle too. Let me pray with you. Folks, that's being open and honest and taking it to God, submitting to Him, and recognizing we need Him in our lives.

You raised your hand that you faced temptation this last week. How many of you think you're going to face temptation this coming week? What are you going to do?

That's the question. Submit to God. Resist the devil. Share it with each other and pray for each other. Bottom line, folks, when it comes to temptation, and I mean this, we need all the help we can get.

Do you believe that? God certainly says He'll give us strength, but He's also given us each other. Let's use all that so that we can endure and overcome the temptation that comes.

Let's pray together. Lord God, thank You again for Your Word, and I thank You for the truth of it. I pray, Lord, that we are truthful with each other. That we are willing to admit, yeah, we all face temptation.

[31:55] It comes. Whether we want to admit it or not, that's just the truth. But Lord, I pray that as we face it, that we know that we don't face it alone, that we face it together.

That we have brothers and sisters in the Lord that can come alongside us and face it with us and pray with us and encourage us. But we have to be honest with each other and open with each other and not judging each other.

And I pray, Lord, that's the kind of family that You've drawn together here in this place. And Lord, I also pray that as we face those temptations, that most importantly, we remember, we need to submit to You, to bring it all to You, to have a desire in our heart for what You want, not our own desires.

That our number one desire is for Your will to happen in our lives. That's submitting to You and then resisting the devil. And You tell us when we do that in that order that He will flee from us, and we thank You for that.

that You give us the recipe for how to overcome temptation. Help us to follow it and to live it out in our lives. Thank You for the strength that You will give. And Lord, I just pray You'd give us the courage, the boldness, and the strength to live these things out in our lives.

[33:01] And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.