

Responding to Tempations: A Biblical Perspective from James 1

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Date: 23 June 2024

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[0 : 00] All right, for the rest of you who are copping out on Junior Church, please turn in your Bibles to James chapter 1. James chapter 1.

Before I get there, a few announcements for you. So next Sunday, we're going to be having a joint service with Church 99ers.

We have Carl Hargrove, who is a professor and pastor at Grace Community Church down in California, is paying us a visit.

He and I are going to be mashing out some serious theology out on the golf course this coming week. But in the meantime, he's going to come here.

He's actually coming up to connect. In fact, there's about 15 alumni in the region, and this is the first time Canada has ever had that many graduates, probably within a 100- or 200-kilometer area.

[0 : 58] So he's just coming up to see how that ministry can be of service to us, how they can love us, train us, and just be a part of our ministries and our local churches.

So very appreciative of Carl and just his ministry. So you'll get to know a little bit more about him. It'll be in the bulletin.

And the other thing I want you to put on the calendars, as Dave said, we have a membership and we've got a baptism coming up on July 14th. If you've never been baptized and you recognize that you do need to be baptized, here's a great opportunity to join a lovely young lady that we have here to be baptized, to openly profess your faith in Jesus Christ.

So that's on July 14th. And membership doesn't mean you have to be sold out on membership, but you just want to come. You want to understand what do we mean by membership? What does it mean to be a part of Squamish Baptist?

I even throw in a free lunch that I don't cook. So that should be more of an incentive to you. And lest I happen to tell you I was cooking my Italian hot roast beef sandwiches, then you'd be sure to be there.

[2 : 06] All right, we're dealing with a topic here today that, listen, I know it's summer. You guys tend to take time off, right?

The kids are off school. You're kind of taking time off yourself. So I thought I'd give you a little bit of a break on the sermon series and talk about something that'll probably be only appropriate to very few of you.

So if you guys can maybe think about just maybe encouraging your brothers and sisters that are here, because I'm sure it's a topic you've all mastered.

But we're going to be talking about trials and temptations. Trials and temptations. So my next three sermons, so we're going to be looking at the aspect of temptations and what does the Bible actually say about temptations, or better yet, I want to be able to demonstrate to you what is the biblical way to think through trials and temptations.

And I pray that it'll be an encouragement. So then after Carl will be preaching, Dave's going to be preaching, and then I'll be doing a two-piece series on trials in July.

[3 : 19] I was going to lay out the rest of the summer series to you, but Dustin warned me that if you go too far ahead, then the summer's already disappeared, and we don't want that to happen yet. So, all right, let's just give thanks to the Lord, our Heavenly Father, for His Word, dear, holy God.

God, we're getting into a situation that every single one of us is acutely aware of, and that is called the temptations, the temptations of life.

These are the bait, those things that call out to us, whether it's our flesh, our eyes, or our minds, that take our eye off of you.

Ultimately, that's what it is, the way to live, the way we are to love our kids, our spouses, our responsibilities in life that you have called to us.

It's so easy to neglect our calling, because there's so many aspects of this world that call us to other things that are not of you.

[4 : 31] Father, I pray just as I tongue-in-cheek open this sermon that not many of us need to hear this. Father, we always do. It's always a great reminder of the things that we need to keep in front of us, to keep us holy, to strengthen our love for you, to bind us to the works of you, and that ultimately strengthen us in our Christian life.

So, Father, I pray that this sermon would fall on the ears that it is meant to hear and to transform the heart that it is meant to turn. We ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. When I was interning as a pastor, I was interning actually in the great state of Illinois. It's really not that great of a state, but anyway. Great time, but I get called to other churches in different places, and I finally got to go to Wisconsin.

First time I ever got to go to Wisconsin. And I'm preaching at this church. It's a very large church, but it was a church without a pastor, so I was coming in to preach. And this lady kind of comes up to me, and she announces her presence to me by telling me that she should have been the one leading the music on that Sunday.

And I'm like, okay. Like, I really know nobody. They just tell me a church name and an address, show up and preach, and I do, right? So, I'm kind of like, all right.

[6 : 06] So, there's a bit of a story here. And she proceeds to tell me that she is mad at God. She's mad at God. So, I'm now thinking to myself, I need to ask her why she's thinking that way.

And then the other hand, I'm starting to think, I wonder what kind of music we would have had if she was mad at God that Sunday. She was leading. So, she tells me this story that growing up through high school and university, she felt a call to go to the mission field.

And she finally was able to realize her dream. Except within that first year, she ended up being pulled back from that mission field. And she said she was mad at God because he gave her a taste of this thing that she had desired all her life.

And then he just kind of pulls the rug out from under her. And now she was in a place where she had a very bad attitude and was, I would say, in a dismal place of life.

Have you guys ever had those moments where you might think that you're mad at God or you're angry? Something isn't working the way you thought it should work?

[7 : 19] Well, as it turned out, I was able to learn from one of the elders that the reason she was pulled back from the mission field is that she kept pursuing men for marriage that were not believers or a part of the mission team.

So, they had felt it was better for her to be home if that was her desire to be married, to be home married rather than pursuing these relationships. And instead of repenting and seeing her own sin interactions, she made the choice to blame God.

I feel weird saying this, but even in 15 years of being a pastor, I've seen it time and time again. When people are confronted or fall into sin or even in abusive situations or as serious as having affairs on their spouse, they often don't blame the abuser themselves or any other reason except God.

The fact is, we were born to blame God, aren't we? In fact, the very first sin which happened to God's very first people, Adam and Eve in the garden, when Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, their immediate response was to blame each other.

Adam blamed Eve and to God saying, the woman you put me in here with, she gave me the fruit and I ate it.

[9 : 00] And Eve in turn blamed the serpent saying, the serpent deceived me and I ate. The reality is the inclination to blame is as old as humanity itself, as I said.

It has been our cry from the beginning of time when confronted with our unrighteousness, our sin, it is to blame. So if you notice in James, this book of James, now this book that James is writing, he's writing this to a varied group of believers, for a lack of a better word, have failed in some of their trials of life.

Their life situation was tough and it led them to sin and they started to blame God for their sin.

So this morning, I want to give you four reasons why God doesn't tempt us. Four reasons why God does not tempt us, nor is he the source of our sin.

So that's what I want to accomplish for you today. Because I believe that right thinking will help in right acting. Right?

[10:22] If we know how to think and understand who God is in regards to sin, it will help us see and understand our confusion. So let me read this passage.

Please read along with me in James 1, starting in verse 13. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

And why is he saying that? It's because that's what they were saying. They were saying that God had put them in these type of trials, that they failed, and they're now blaming God for those trials. He said, 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. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

[11:27] 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.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creation.

Creatures, sorry. So the first reason why God does not tempt us is because temptation is contrary to the nature of God. It is contrary to the nature of God.

Paul, or James, gets to it right at the start, right here. 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.

Anyone who says that they are mad at God, or they are tempted by God, has a deficient view of the theology of God. That means they really do not understand the character of God.

[12:32] James is not leaving us with a lot of ambiguity here. Maybe you've asked the question, how could God allow this to happen to me?

But sometimes we're not that bold. Sometimes we're not that forward with God. We're not going to tell God that we're mad at him. We're not going to tell God that he's tempting us.

We come up with other ways to demonstrate what we're truly feeling. And I'm going to give you three arguments that we give to God. The first one is called the ordination argument.

This is the belief that since God ordains everything, we then mistakenly believe that God ordained this sin in my life. God, you brought me into this, this person into my life.

You brought this situation. And since you have ordained all things, I'm now a victim of your ordination. You with me on that? That's the first one. The second one that we use is called the circumstantial argument.

[13:36] And it's actually others' fault. It's God's fault for placing them in a difficult circumstance that simply was too much for us, right?

I am so poor I had to steal. You do not know how tough my professor is. He's so tough that I have to cheat in order to get my degree.

Or, I know that person isn't my spouse, but I love them. And therefore, I am justified by pursuing my sin.

Then the other argument that we often use, it's the dispositional argument. Basically, I am blaming my passions and my appetite.

God gave them to me. Therefore, I have to be authentic to myself, right? I have to pursue those things in life that God has given me. If any of you guys are familiar with Ernest Hemingway, and if you're not, your school has failed you.

[14:45] But that was his big cry. I have to be authentic. I have to pursue these aspects and elements of my life to be true to myself.

Solomon reminds us quite clearly in Proverbs 19.3, it says, Man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord.

Man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord. Note what James writes here.

He says, Can not be tempted. What that means is that God is untemptable. That means that God is without the capacity for temptation.

God is invincible to the assaults of evil. In fact, God and evil cannot even exist in the same world.

[15:50] They are mutually exclusive. God is far beyond evil. As one author paints the picture, God is like a sunbeam shining on a dump that is untouched by the trash.

The trash does not influence the sunbeam in any way. Isaiah 6.3 simply says, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. Leviticus 19.2 commands, You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. God's holiness is eternally unmixed with anything less than pure and perfect righteousness.

So much so, the prophet Habakkuk simply declared, You who are of pure eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.

That holy, holy, holy with God does mean perfection. It means ultimate separation from all that is wrong and evil.

[17:03] That God is untainted by our mess. Now, some might argue, and you might be thinking about this now, Well, what about Matthew 6.13?

Right? The Lord's Prayer. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. What that word means in that context is, the plea is, Lead us not into trials too great for our maturity to handle.

That's exactly the passage that Dave had read to us this morning. Where it assures us in 1 Corinthians 10.13, 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 also be able to endure it.

So we conclude quite clearly that God is not the one who is tempting us. For God to do so, it would be contrary to his very nature, contrary to who he is.

[18:17] God abhors evil, and he's untouched by it. So to state that God purposely brings evil for us to sin and to tempt us would be a violation of his character.

So that is the first reason. The second reason is, second truth is, God doesn't need to tempt man. Why? Because man is tempted by his own nature.

God is tempted by his own nature. James 1.14, notice it says, But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Think about those words that he uses. They are lured and enticed. The fact of the matter is, James is getting to the heart of the problem, dare I say.

Notice the word, each person. James is calling our attention that we are the problem. In fact, he emphasizes that we are the problem.

[19:33] That we are tempted, that each person is tempted by our own desires. The fact of the matter is, temptation is universal.

It is continuous. And sadly, it is a repeated and inescapable reality of life. It will always be here. There's no escaping it. There's no heaven is a place on earth. If you remember Belinda Carlisle back from the 80s. It's sad.

It's depressing to a point. You see, to not be free of temptation, especially when we are struggling with a particular sin issue that we see everywhere, is difficult for us to understand.

But I want you to notice where it says the temptation is coming from. It's coming from his or own desire. What does that mean? It's not from God. You know who else who it's not from?

[20:41] Satan. How often we want to blame someone else and if we can't blame God, let's just blame Satan.

Well, James is getting that the root of our temptation is found in our desires. It's not from circumstances. It's from us within.

As one author simply says, man carries the combustible material for temptation right within himself. If anyone has here has been burnt by the hard flames of sin, you know this to be true. 1 John 2.16 outlines the sources of temptations.

John says, for all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

[21:57] The desires are within us and none of us are free from them. Romans 5.12 Paul explains, therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, that is Adam, death through sin, so death spread to all men because of all sin.

What it simply means is because of Adam's first sin in that garden has infected every single one of us. All of humanity from the first father is now infected with this sin, with this capacity to be tempted, that none of us are free of it.

So the first step for you as believers in Jesus Christ is to begin with an understanding that temptation doesn't come from without, it comes from within. It comes from our own desires. Now, Paul is not simply talking about sexual temptations, but he's talking about greed for gain, desire for power, for prominence. These are all parts of temptation. As I stated, James uses this vivid imagery to describe the process.

[23 : 12] It says, lured and enticed by his own desire. It's like there's this picture, we're in this very safe place, and there's this trap outside our door, and it's calling to us, it's this lure, it's this bait.

And here's the thing, guys, if sin were not attractive or pleasurable, why would it tempt us? Right? It's not like temptation is like this horrible, stinky pile of filth and garbage outside your door. Boy, I can't keep from going there.

It's the exact opposite. It has a sweet aroma. It smells like it's going to taste good. And the reality is, you and I, we all have unique lusts and desires, and when temptation gets us, we are drawn from the things that keep us safe to places of danger.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, with irresistible power, desire seizes mastery over the flesh. It makes no difference whether it be sexual desire, ambition, vanity, revenge, love of fame and power, or greed for money.

[24 : 36] Joy is extinguished in us. And then we seek our joy in the creature. At this moment, God is quite unreal to us. He loses all reality and only desire for the creature is real.

Oh, I'm sorry. At this moment, God is quite unreal to us. He loses all reality and only desire for the creature is real.

Satan does not fill us with hatred for God, but with forgetfulness of God. Lust envelops our mind and will in deepest darkness.

The powers of clear discrimination and decision are taken from us. The questions present themselves. Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?

Like Eve who said, is it really? Did God really? Or Satan said, is that really what God says? Is it really not permitted to me?

[25 : 45] yet yes expected of me to appease desire in my particular situation? The fact of the matter is, we are in the grip of lust which our nature dragged and enticed us to.

God is never more distant. This, my friends, is our human nature. So we've got God who does not tempt us, and our greatest enemy is our own desire.

And I want to follow up that God doesn't tempt man, but temptation is the our nature of our desire. It's not just our desire, it is the nature of our desire.

James 1.15 says, then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. There's only one place that that desire leads to, and that is death.

[26 : 56] In fact, James is using this childbirth imagery to describe the nature of lust and its consequences. Desire, when conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when fully grown, brings forth death.

We might describe sin as brokenness or rebellion or just simply missing the mark of God's best for us. Sin, in its greatest understanding, it's knowingly being disobedient to the perfect will of God. But here's the thing, guys. when we're called in temptation, it's not an isolated event, but it's actually a part of a process that has been going on in our life.

And I'm going to break down the sin process, for lack of a better word, in these four stages for you. All right? Make it really simple. First stage is desire.

Desire begins with an emotion. It's a feeling, a longing for something, and it usually comes deep within. It could be a need for love, a need to prove myself, a need for something I am jealous that my neighbor has that I don't.

[28 : 20] It always begins with this emotion. There's this longing. It could be as simple as a watch in a jewelry store. It could be your neighbor's car.

It could be the perfect house that you want, and it could even be a person. And I think I used that analogy years ago when I was here, that when I was younger, it was the motorcycle.

It was the longing for a specific type of motorcycle. But it is an intense desire to have it, and it gets to a point where it has to have our full attention.

This is called bait. All right? Bait. And I shared a little bit about that motorcycle with you when I first started off. You know, my first career wasn't a pastor, but I was doing that whole secret agent thing out of Ottawa.

And Ottawa, a lot of political people going out, a lot of young people in their late 20s, 30s, you're starting to roll in the cash. Used to go downtown Ottawa. Used to be called the byword market.

[29 : 21] I know it's still rocking. And, you know, people would eat out, especially when the sun starts coming out. People wear nice shoes, nice jackets. You know, all those longings. But for me, it was Motorcycle Alley.

There was this place all the guys with their bullet and racing bikes used to sit. And I remember thinking, I had a pretty nice bike, but I was like, man, that bike doesn't measure up to sit in that row, right?

But it was this longing that we have. And you guys know what I'm talking about. It doesn't have to be a thing. It can be a person, or it could be a perceived idea, but it's got your whole attention.

So that's the first stage. It's that desire. The second stage is the deception. And this is when the mind kicks in. First it's the heart, and now we're going to the mind.

Desire is the motion, but the mind begins to rationalize and justify acquiring the desired object. We don't tell our minds to rationalize our lusts.

[30 : 23] They've already been predisposed to them. I don't have to talk myself into this desire or lust. I'm already born to love it. I'm already driven to it like a fish seeing the bait on the hook.

We begin to rationalize away the dangers. You know, we all know the fish, right? He's lost four of his family members in the last half hour by biting into that piece of juicy chunk of worm there.

Man, it's going to be so different for me, isn't it? And we know the story, right? We've been there.

Our friends, family members, they've fallen for that trap, but not me.

I'm too good. I'm too smart. I can really get close enough and not be affected, right? I can handle this just this one time.

For me with the motorcycle, I can handle this one extra payment, right? You know, if I already had my bike paid off, but if I sold that bike and I paid X amount more, I can handle that payment.

[31 : 26] I can have that other bike and that will allow me to ride in those cool Ottawa summers. That's the deception. So there's desire has infected my heart.

The deception has kicked in at my head. And then now I start to design it. I start to design it. This is where the plans begin to form. We make plans to fulfill our emotional desire that we have already rationalized and justified in our minds.

See, now this stage involves our will. It's the conscious decision to pursue the lust until it is satisfied. You see, because this is where our will is involved, this is the stage where most of our guilt is involved.

What we've longed for and rationalized is now consciously pursued as a matter of choice. So when I call that guy, I want your bike.

I'll buy that bike off you. It's hanging out in the workplace where you know that person who pays special attention to you who's not your spouse.

[32 : 49] But you know they're going to comment on your hair, your clothes. It's going to make you feel good about yourself. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to put myself in those positions, right?

See, I'm now designing. I'm not going to really sin, but I'm going to put myself close enough to it, right? And then obviously the fourth stage is just simply called disobedience.

It's when we're invited in or invited out. Chomp on that bait. If we allow the process to continue, the design produces disobedient to God's law, which gives birth to sin, which gives birth to death.

Desire leads to deception. deception to design and design to disobedience, which is sin. The earlier we resist, the greater the likelihood we will avoid that sin.

The longer we delay resisting, the more we play with it. Think we're mentally strong or I will be able to curtail at the last possible moment.

[34 : 02] Chances are you are going to fail. The fact of the matter is the battle must be fought in the mind where it is conceived. We lose the battle in the mind.

It goes to design where we plan our sin. We need to avoid temptations by avoiding places and situations where we know we will be tempted.

For my motorcycle, I quit going to the byword market. I had to stop. I wanted it too much. I had to make a conscious decision, not going to go to that part of town.

I did not need to see those motorcycles. You see, instead of a rationalizing temptation, we need to oppose it with God's word, just as Jesus did in the wilderness.

Romans 12, 2, Paul instructs us. He says, Do not be conformed to this world. Anything in this world that is driving a passion in you that is in direct contradiction to God is not from God.

[35 : 07] But you know what? We're so prone to it that he's got to tell us, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your heart, your soul.

No, no, no. Your mind. The mind is that place that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And some things are tempting. Some things are controlling. I know this might surprise many of you guys, but there was a time when I had to lose weight.

Still do, I know. But I had to have surgery. I had these hernias that were killing me. I had five hernias, so I had to lose 25 pounds. And I tell you, I had this strict diet, and I had no problem sticking to that diet.

But I was pastoring at a fairly large church. I was an associate pastor. We had close to a thousand people, and there's events going on. And I got to tell you, the food was, I, oh, because it's normal, right?

[36 : 18] You're talking, you're sticking something in your mouth, you're drinking something. And I started to see that this is a spiritual thing, because I wasn't actually hungry, but I was so used to acting in that way.

And this is what happens to us when we live in this world. We've got to normalize things. We think this is normal part of doing things. And then when we try to stop, it hurts.

Now, I'm going to speak really personally with you. And I speak to this understanding my failings and understanding failing of others, but I'm going to use this illustration from my past.

As you know, when I was with CSIS, my whole role was to acquire double agents, right? So my job was to get ambassadors from foreign nations that were enemies of Canada to become my friend and tell me their state secrets, okay?

So when I would, and I had a certain list of targets and my whole mandate was state-sponsored terrorism. This was groups that were running covert, bad operations here in Canada.

[37 : 37] And the hardest guy to recruit was the guy who never came out of the embassy, and he only stayed with his own people, and he didn't do anything stupid or wrong.

He was pretty much unrecruitable. Like if he was a true believer, he knew I was outside that building. I was waiting for him.

And when I come, I don't come as the heavy. I come as the friend. I'll pick up. He's unhappy. He didn't get that promotion he didn't like. He didn't like the way his government was doing things.

He thought something was unjust. I knew, and it's almost the perfect imagery, I was temptation. In those situations, I would present before him something that he would make himself feel better, and that he would want to trust me more than his own country.

And obviously, I wasn't sin. I knew what they were doing was wrong and evil, and I wanted to bring him over to our side. But it's the same thing with us.

[38 : 50] If we stay connected to the family of God, our church, and our friends, and we keep faithful people in our lives, that's the number one way of countering our desires, getting deceived, disobeying, and falling into any of the traps that Satan leads for us.

It does mean being honest and authentic with people who love us. That guy, I remember this one embassy, couldn't get to him until he committed the crime that I got him.

I had him. Because now he didn't want that crime to be known back home because it'd mean, but over here, hey, I'm freedom. That's the way Satan works.

And you as parents, you all know this. You instinctively know when your children are listening to someone more than you. You know when you are no longer the greater voice in their lives.

Am I speaking truth or lies? Or is this just me? I know what's going on with my kids. I can tell how they're doing with the Lord just by how they relate to me during the week when I get phone calls or not get phone calls now, right?

[40 : 09] We know that. And we as parents have a duty to protect our children, to be active and discourage their friendships. We've specifically told one of our kids, we don't want you seeing those

people because we know that whole circle is an absolute mess.

You see, once that cycle is complete, sin is accomplished, and then we now experience spiritual death.

That's exactly what Adam and Eve experienced in the garden. They didn't die right away, but there was spiritual death. And this leads me to our final reason why God doesn't tempt us.

And this is because it is the nature of God's character. It is the nature of God's character. James reminds us in verse 17, 18, 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.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be kind of a first fruits of his creatures. Now let me tell you about God and what we learn about this verse.

[41 : 35] One, the gifts that God gives that come from above are good, they're continual, and they're never ending. So this good that you think is coming from outside your world, it's not really good.

What God is giving you is good, it's continual, and it will never end, right? We need to accept this truth. Not only that, these gifts are perfect, because that is the giver of the gift.

God is perfect, therefore his gifts are perfect. And the other aspect of, we understand here, it says, notice not even like a shadow. That means God is unchanging.

He doesn't change. Now why is this important? What happens if we don't catch sin in the desire phase? What then? This is it.

God knows you and I can't fix ourselves. You see, God knows that our problem is internal. We have already died spiritually from the moment Adam and Eve sinned.

[42 : 46] So the solution is internal as well. So that means there is no external ritual, no ceremony, no right, no profession that we can do to change our nature.

Our nature is already compromised. Can't change that. You see, we cannot become righteous by acting righteously or talking righteously.

Okay? That's not going to change it. What we need is we need a new heart. We need a new nature. Theologians call this the great exchange.

It means we need to be recreated. We need our old nature to be changed. We need to move from death unto life. We start by not blaming others, not blaming circumstances, not blaming our temptations, and above all, we quit blaming God.

It means we need to take the full blame on ourselves. We need to understand that our fallenness, our brokenness, our lusts, our weakness, our sins, all that is within must be dealt with from within.

[44 : 15] And you know what it means. It means we need a savior. We need someone to come outside of ourselves. We need someone to reach in and change our heart.

We need someone to come in and change our nature. We need someone to come in and give us a rebirth. In fact, the matter if you are here and you do not know Jesus Christ, this is the whole purpose of who Jesus Christ is.

Jesus Christ is the gift the Father gave to us. Because God, he just tells us right here, he already knows our nature is corrupt. Jesus Christ is the gift that God gives to us.

Because Jesus Christ, we accept him as Lord and Savior, becomes our nature, right? We accept his nature. His nature becomes our nature. It means when God looks upon us, he sees Jesus Christ.

The fact of the matter is if you recognize these things and you're still guilt-ridden, it generally means that everything you've tried to do to make it right has failed.

[45 : 23] Right? You've tried being good. You've tried being better. You've tried to be better than most. Right? If I can find someone worse than me, I'm going to feel better about myself and maybe some way that's going to balance things with life.

You try to act righteously, talk righteously, but you know in your heart of heart, nothing changes. You may try controlling your temper, your actions, but as soon as that fuses, let's pow!

It's off again, right? You're starting over at the beginning. Perhaps you're that person who knows yourself more from your sin than from your success.

See, here's the thing. When sin is fully grown, it becomes a habit and it determines your character. So sin cannot be just something on the side.

When you continually and every time it gets easier and easier and easier, it becomes who you are. Perhaps you are here and even a Christian, but you did not heed the warning of your conscience.

[46 : 40] You stepped into that sin. You took that bait. Maybe you even jumped at that bait because it was so tasty and now you realize you're neck deep in despair, neck deep in shame and you desperately want to make it right with God and you do.

You begin by telling God you're sorry. You begin by telling God you will change. And then you try to mask the guilt and shame by doing spiritual things, right?

You try covering your guilt and shame with prayers or works or maybe I'm just going to serve more or maybe I'm going to push the guilt out and it never seems to go away.

Joy is a fleeting thought. You attempt to cover up your shortcomings with what theologians called moral formation, good works, but by golly, you may have been saved by grace, but you live by works.

Friends, those of you who know Jesus Christ and those of you who do not know Christ but want to, everything can change right here, right now.

[47 : 58] that freedom that you so desperately desire to be escaping from that guilt and shame that you want gone now, it can disappear. If you want that freedom from your sin, that sin that's enslaved you, it simply begins with accepting the blame and begins with repentance.

It's a simple confession of sin. It's no more blaming. It's, Lord, I am guilty of this.

Please forgive me. That's it. God's not asking for anything more because he knows you can't do the work to make it right.

Right. It means you own your sin. You're going to ask right here, right now, Lord, forgive me.

Forgive me. This is what verse 18 means. Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth.

[49 : 06] That truth is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the good news that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

What we do is no longer for us, but it's for him. You see, James is reminding us that God sent his son, his only son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross.

And he did so when we were clearly unholy, when we were clearly slaves, we were clearly lost. We were clearly enemies of him. And God, knowing that, knew the price to be paid for our freedom was his son, still did so.

And all our sins were washed away. Jesus Christ died so that you and I can be saved from the penalty of this death. The conclusion of sin is called spiritual separation.

By Jesus dying on the cross, that separation has now ended. We're welcomed back into the family.

[50 : 27] Notice it says, first fruits of his creatures. That is what God has designed for us, that to continually pour out his good gifts and it can begin right here, right now for you.

Like I said, it begins with a confession. It begins with believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you. Notice, I didn't say good people.

I didn't say my people. But that he died on the cross for everyone. Why? Because scripture reminds us over and over and over that there are none that are righteous.

So my friends, on this day, maybe today is the day that you choose the righteousness of Jesus Christ over your own righteousness. Maybe now, today is the day that you choose Jesus Christ's righteousness over your death, your despair, your shame, your guilt, your brokenness.

An amazing thing, it didn't have to happen in Squamish or even B.C. or even in the last year. Jesus Christ promised to take the weight of all your sin from all time at this moment as you receive this gift of eternal life.

[51 : 57] let me pray for you. Father, I think we all know that temptation leads to death. Some of us, we know because we've seen our friends and our family go that way and we've seen it destroy them.

we've seen alcohol, we've seen divorce, we've seen what leads to divorce, we've seen poor money management, we've seen neglect of our children, we've seen pursuing profession over family.

All these ways that we thought would benefit us in the end destroy us. For that is the nature of sin, that is the bait, it looks so good.

But we love this promise that you give to us through James is it does not have to last forever. That separation from God is not eternal. It's only eternal if we do not confess, we do not repent, we do not accept the free gift of grace that he offers us.

Father, we're all trying to figure things out. I know some of us are plagued by actions we did 20, 30 years ago and we wonder what was I thinking? But Father, we know that you are a good God and when you bring these thoughts to us they're generally because you want us to do something with

them and generally more or less it's to give them to you.

[53 : 33] To confess just in the stillness of our hearts and say, Father, forgive me. I knew better but I pursued my desires. Please forgive me.

Some of us we need to be saved from the death of our desires. Sometimes the consequences of life are heavy but that does not mean God does not have good things for us.

Many of us have rode that train to the end and we know the hurt it's caused in us but Father, we know that you can take our lives and do something rich and great with them for your glory rather than our own glory.

Father, the reality is you know each and every story that's in this building and there are incredible stories here about how people at different points in their life finally got to that point of bending the knee to you.

Father, I pray that this would be such a day for a lost soul that is here. A soul that wants to be found by you.

[54 : 54] God, we love you. We seek to serve you. We don't come here to judge people for their actions, their disobedience or for following that way of temptation. temptation. It was designed such a way to trap us.

We've all been there at different aspects of our lives. But, Father, your blood is red enough to make us white as snow.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, in your name. Amen.