

"Blessed Is The Man" (James 1:12-18)

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Introduction: The Difference Between Trial and Temptation

- A. Luther: "[God] does not test in order that we may fear and hate Him like a tyrant but to the end that He may exercise and stir up faith and love in us. Satan, however, tempts for evil, in order to draw you away from God and to make you distrust and blaspheme God." (Luther's Works, American Edition, vol. 4, pg. 132)**
- B. Right off we have to acknowledge something that we just don't like to accept: God tests His children! Not only is this taught in James 1:13, but it comes out in James 1:2-4. We are actually commanded to "count it all joy." This doesn't mean that you are necessarily going to see the good in the trial, but our response is to be the response of faith...trust in the midst of trial. Don't worry, you aren't alone...this was true of Abraham, this was true of Jesus Himself, it is true of all of your brothers and sisters in the faith!**
- C. But how do we know the difference between trial and temptation?**
 - 1. In trial we are led to remain in God's Word and will.**
 - a. Stay in marriage and do not leave it.**
 - b. Provide for your family, do not neglect them.**
 - c. Retain the faith, do not forsake it.**
 - d. That is, trial is about remaining faithful to Jesus Christ.**

Bottom line: James 1:13: This person does not say, "I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."

- 2. In temptation we are led to turn away from God's Word and will.**
 - a. Rationalize as to why we should leave marriage.**
 - b. Rationalize as to why we should not provide for our family.**
 - c. Rationalize as to why we can no longer trust in and follow Christ.**
 - d. That is, temptation is about turning away from Jesus Christ.**

Story: A long time ago and in a another church far, far away, a very active member of the congregation I was serving, decided to leave her husband and her children. Why? The reason was simple and direct: she was sick and tired of living for everyone else. It was time for her to live for herself. This was utterly tragic for even Jesus Christ Himself didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give His life to save us from sin...God Himself came to serve, serve, serve...imagine the tragedy of someone who misses the very purpose of life? To be served by Jesus Christ and then to know the joy of a new life that is dedicated to service. Her husband and children were devastated. But there is always a rationalization!

Bottom line: The person who succumbs to temptation is a person who blames: they blame others for their succumbing to temptation and God Himself! You know the old saying, "the

devil made me do it," or someone complains, "this is the way God made me," or they imitate Adam when he blamed his wife for his sin (Genesis 3:12)!

- D. The good response to trial is to contemplate our own sin, the bad response to temptation is to contemplate who we can blame!

Part I: But is James leading us to moralism and legalism?

- A. It is easy to get the impression that James is all about performance, but this will not hold from text itself.
- B. James presents the depth of our sin when he describes how temptation works!
- C. James knows the depths of our sin: we are "lured and enticed by [our] own desire" (v 14). James knows that sin is in us, a deep spiritual disease. He also knows that this very same desire leads to sin which leads to death (v 15) and those who are spiritually dead cannot ever perform well enough to save themselves. So much for moralism and legalism!

Part II: For this reason James leads us to the Gospel!

- A. God pours out good and perfect gifts from above, coming down to save us (v 17).
- B. Who came down?

John 3:13: "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man."

- C. And notice that because our Lord came down that He has brought other gifts with Him:

Ephesians 4:10-12: "He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

- D. This is God's plan for helping you in the midst of trial. When you are under trial, what are you to do? Rely on yourself to follow 5 steps, or 7 principles, or 10 do's and don'ts? The law actually pronounces and increases the power of temptation and reveals that as a sinner all you can do is sin...so what do you do?
- E. Behold the One who came down! He has set up His Church to give you Himself, and when you receive Christ then you are no longer alone in facing your trial because Christ is right there with you!
- F. Verse 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."***
 - 1. Jesus is the Word (John 1:1).
 - 2. Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6).
 - 3. Jesus is the basis for our being "firstfruits" since our conversion is based on the victory of Jesus from the dead. The resurrected Christ is identified as the "firstfruits" at 1st Corinthians 15:20 & 23. He shares His victory over the greatest trial on the cross with you through the power of His resurrection.
 - 4. Imagine dear Christian and know that this is true: the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is with you when you face any and all trials!

G. So Christ is your life:

- 1. You are brought forth to live in faith through the Word of Christ.**
- 2. You are brought forth to live in faith through the Truth of Christ.**
- 3. You are brought forth to live as God's new creation because Christ shares the first-fruits of His resurrection life with you!**

Conclusion:

This is why as a Christian you may remain steadfast under trial, because Jesus is standing with you. Jesus is holding you. Jesus is guiding you. Everything changes depending on your company. When I was a little boy, a neighborhood bully came to harass me and my friends. He was a few years older, a lot bigger and a lot stronger. We were intimidated to no end. I boldly warned him that if he didn't leave us alone, I would call my big brother who is 8 years older and at the time was a football player in high school. The bully started laughing at me and thought I was bluffing. To which I yelled for my brother. As my big brother walked up the driveway, the bully's eyes almost bugged out of his head and he raced away on his bike so fast that you couldn't see him for dust!

But that was just my brother! Christian when you are under trial, Satan laughs, but then Jesus comes and your enemy must run! Christ is with you under trial, He is your strength, He comes to you again this day through His Word, through His Truth, through the first-fruits...in His body and in His blood you receive the resurrected Christ who has already proven His victory for you even over death, not even *that* trial can defeat you!