

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EVFree
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Surprising Antidote
James 1:13-18

Temptation. If you are an East Fork Steelhead you must assume that in your lifetime you will be tempted multiple times on your swim through the ocean past buoy ten and up the mighty Columbia River, taking a left into the mouth of the Lewis river and heading up the east fork. Past Day Break bridge the temptations intensify and swimming through Lewisville Park and making your way under the Heisson Bridge, jumping the Lucia Falls and certainly trying to swim your way past my favorite fishing hole. If you are a steelhead you can count on being tempted by artificial flies, spinners, corkies, wiggle warts and hooks baited with shrimp and worms. Let the steelhead who thinks he can withstand temptation beware lest he fall to the fisherman's' deceiving lures and become ensnared by the net, captured and devoured.

Temptation. We face it too. I wished that as we got older the temptations would go away, but they do not. In some areas they will intensify. I Corinthians 10:12-13 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man..." Temptation is common to man. If we think somewhere in the back of our minds that others may go down, but we will never fall, then the Bible warns. Watch out, lest you fall.

Each temptation is an opportunity isn't it? A chance to blow it or a chance to get stronger. How will we be able to choose well and grow strong and mature when the lure comes floating down the river and spinning and flashing very enticingly right in front of our nose? How can we be like those wise and big and alive steelhead that refuse to bite at the attractive bait and simply move to the side, time after time let it go on by until the evil fisherman gets tired and gives up?

I believe God wants us to radically change our thinking in response to the temptations that float our way. There are certainly some things that we need to beware of and some heads up things we need to be able to identify to keep us from devouring temptation. We need to be wise to the progression of temptation and schemes of the evil one, and I will share a few of those this morning. But I find it very interesting that when James talks about temptation, even though he is intensely practical in his approach to faith, he does not give us a list of 10 tips to keep us from giving in to temptation. His antidote for combating temptation is somewhat surprising. If we are able to fully understand and apply what James has to say it will totally defang the temptations that sink their teeth into our lives.

Turn with me in your Bibles to James chapter one. We are just getting into our Faith Works series. James wants us to know that a faith that is real is a faith that really works. James is not impressed by mere titles or saying the fancy church words. His main point is that if your faith is real then even your dog ought to know you are different. It will make a difference in the way you treat people, in what you say, in what you do, how you respond to trials and temptations. In v.2 of chapter one he started out with a shocking command for us to “consider is all joy when we encounter various trials.” The only possible chance I have to experience joy in the middle of tough times is if I can know that God is using it to shape my endurance and character and there is the hope of heaven beyond the present. I must believe that God is wise and then follow Him without any doubting, because there will be times I’m going to be tempted to say “God you want me to do what? Forgive whom? Give up what? Start doing that? Loving them?” And go off hunting for a second opinion; perhaps a girlfriend that will agree with me and discount what God has to say. Perhaps a guy friend that will ridicule with mans logic God’s truth. There are plenty of second opinions to be had if you happen to be frustrated with God wisdom. God says, “If that’s the way you want

to go, OK but you will be guaranteed an unstable life. Don't expect to receive anything from the Lord being unstable in all your ways." We need to know that God is wise. Just ask for his wisdom. Don't doubt. If we intend to truly follow it then he will give it to us. James says, "if you want joy in the face of trials, then know that God is wise...follow Him.

Starting in v.13 James says, "When you get hammered by temptation there is something else you need to know about God and live out in order to spiritually thrive." Read with me James 1:13-18 (READ)

"Do not be deceived my beloved brethren." When we give into temptation. When we sin, it is because we have been deceived, we have believed a lie whispered into our ear. In order to tackle temptation we must expose the lies and apply the truth. V.13 is the first lie that gets whispered in our ear. "God must have done this to me." He set me up. It's his fault after all He made me this way. If God had given me the things I need, the things I deserve none of this would have ever had to happen. If God had stopped that ugly thing from happening then I would never have done that and given in to temptation. V.13 "Let no one say when he is tempted "I am being tempted by God." Expose the lie we tell ourselves when we blame someone else, or blame God. It's not my fault. Wrong.

The truth is that God never tempted by evil and he will never tempt anyone. Why? Because it simply is not in his nature. He can't do it. He may allow trials to come into our lives to strengthen our character and make us run back to Him in dependence. Satan certainly is the tempter and deceiver and the liar. But not God does not tempt so stop pushing the blame off on Him. The truth is we ourselves are tempted when we get carried away and enticed by our own lust v.14.

Satan begins his scheme by identifying a desire inside of us. It may well start out being a very legitimate desire like wanting to be loved, accepted or to feel pleasure or have peace, or wanting to provide, or enjoy life. Then Satan whispers a little suggestion in your ear that suggests you could more easily fulfill that legitimate desire in a illegitimate way.

Temptation is often an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way. For example. It's a good thing to pass a test at school. But to pass that test by cheating...looking at your neighbors answers is trying to get a good thing in a bad way. It is a good thing to be to work on time...it is a bad thing to shatter the speed limit to get there. It is a good thing to work and make money to provide for your family. It is a bad thing lie and scheme and steal to make the money. Satan will often whisper in our ear, "come on you deserve it." "come on, no one will ever know." Go ahead you will feel better. After all didn't God create you with that longing? God created that for you to enjoy. Doesn't He want you to be happy? Come on it's only a piece of paper whats the big deal with needing a marriage certificate that's just from the man's government not from God. No one will ever need to find out. You won't get hurt. You can stop whenever you want to." We tend to think of temptations as being something that comes at us from outside our body, but really, temptation comes at us from within. Its like we have a traitor within inside that threatens to open us up vulnerable to the enemy. "each one is carried away and enticed by his own lust."

Understand that normal desires are not sin. Temptation is not sin. Even Jesus was tempted by the devil out in the desert when he was very hungry. Normal desires are given to us by God as a gift because without them we wouldn't live very long. Just think if we never ever got hungry or thirsty. How many of us would remember to eat and drink if we weren't driven to. I know some are thinking "but what a weight loss plan" Without tiredness we would never ever stopped to give our bodies the rest we need and we would wear out fast. If God had not given us a sex drive we would last only one generation. These are all normal God given desires. Our problem comes when we try to fulfill a good thing in a bad way. V.14

"But each one..." each of us has specific personal things that we struggle with. Satan has handcrafted temptations to fit each of us and

they will be different. Some women will hear about what men struggle with and be dumbfounded. "You are tempted by that, I can't believe that is so disgusting I would never fall for that..." Men, hear what women are tempted by and they respond, "what is the big deal get over it, it's done, let it go woman...can't you just be like me and give it up? Satan knows us well. He knows what species of fish he is after and what lure will attract his attention. He knows what time of day, temperature of the water, clarity of the stream, just the right places to have that temptation slide on by. Do we know when we are most tempted? We had better know and keep ourselves out of those high risk times and places. If you know you are most vulnerable at Friday afternoon driving home from work at 4 o'clock then you have got to be sure the Evil fisherman knows when you are going to be driving by. If you are most vulnerable after 11pm in your living room, he knows that as well. If you are most vulnerable when you are tired or angry or lonely or hungry or happy or pleased be assured Satan is a fisherman that has done his homework on you. You had best be ready for an attack because Satan is "prowling about seeking whom he may devour." It may be you need to enlist some help in those times you know you are going to be most vulnerable to temptation. Take off the mask and stop pretending that you never get tempted and picked off. There is no temptation that is common to man. James 5:16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed." Each time temptation comes our way, we have a choice. We can chomp on it and devour it or we have the opportunity to choose right and each time we choose right we will grow stronger. Don't be surprised when you get tempted. V. 13 doesn't say, "if you are tempted...it says, "When you are tempted." Its going to happen so expect it. If you are an effective part of the kingdom of God then Satan has put out a contract hit on you. I'm sure the demons get extra points for knocking you off. If you are a leader growing in Christ...if you are living

for God then expect a few shots headed your way. It is the guys and gals on the front lines that will draw the most fire.

We are tempted and “literally the Greek says we are “dragged off” into our own lust. Saying “I deserve that...its not mine, but I will do whatever it take to get it. There is no resistance on your part, you are dragged off into sin. That lust then gives birth to sin and when sin grows up it matures into death. It may not be physical death but it certainly is spiritual death.

When the Romero’s first got Sally as a family pet, she was only one foot long. Eight years later she had grown to 11-1/2 feet and weighed 80 pounds. Then on July 20, 1993 Sally a Burmese python attacked their 15 yr old son Derek, strangling the teenager until he suffocated to death. Their “pet” seem so harmless and allowed to slither through the home. They had cared for and fed this snake and yet it turned on them and destroyed. We are saddened by what happened, but none of us here this morning are very surprised. The python merely did what was in its nature to do. That is the same way it is with sin. It may be fun to play with. It may amuse us or entertain us but sin is still sin and its wages will eventually come to pay us destruction. Romans 3:23 is still true; “The wages of sin is death.” The new little baby of sin might look kind of cute to us when it is first conceived, but James says, watch out when that baby is full grown. It is going to be deadly dangerous. “when sin is accomplished it brings forth death.” The cycle of deception, temptation, disobedience and death starts out with many very small appearing choices. Will you choose well even in the little things?

.v16 “Do not be deceived” Expose the lies that the evil one has been whispering in your ear. Especially the lies that try to convince us that God is not who he says he is. Watch out when Satan begins to paint you a picture that makes God out to be not so good and sin looks to be not so bad.

V.17 reveals the thinking that we need to renew our minds with if we are going to have any chance of victory in the face of temptation. "Every good thing given and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights." God is good. God is good. All the time. God is good. Whether we feel like it or not. God is good. Whether or not it seems true to us, God is good. Whether or not what is happening seems good from our perspective. God is still good. When temptations come whispering into our lives at the very core is our doubting that God is good. Is God really good? If He were then why is this happening to me? Is God really good? Then he would not have denied me that which I really wanted. If God is really good...then why did he make me this way? Why did he have to let that happen?

James has a very surprising antidote to our tackling temptation doesn't he? I would expect a list of ten things I can do to avoid and combat temptation...but he doesn't give that. He simply says, Brothers don't be deceived. God is good. Everything that is good come down from God. In fact the word used is "coming down". That means the good is continually coming raining down on us. God is constantly giving good gifts to us. Don't be tricked. Don't give into that temptation. God is good. He is not holding out on you. God is not trying to steal all your fun or ripping you off from really enjoying life. Just the opposite. He wants to make your life deeply satisfying and rich and filled with amazing delights and pleasures all coming from his hand above. Stop listening to the father of lies and trying to satisfy our legitimate needs in illegitimate ways, God is saying to us this morning, Trust me and see that I am good. There are things we think that are bad, trials, tough times. We say to God "get me out of here, I don't like this. Why are you doing this to me God." But really God knows that trial is the best thing for us because it takes us to a place we could only dream about being. For most of us here this morning, it was a really tough event in our life that opened our eyes to the reality and need for God in our lives. There have also been times

when what we thought was really good, wasn't all that great, a certain relationship, a job opportunity, a promotion, all looked good but really wasn't. We may not know what is good or bad for us. But we do know that God is always good.

Hannah Whithall Smith writes this, "A great many things in God's divine providence do not look to the eye like goodness. But faith sits down before mysteries such as these and says, "The Lord is good, therefore all that He does must be good, so no matter how it looks. I can wait for His explanations."

Instead of offering three tips on dealing with temptation, James says its about faith in God and putting that faith to work, living it out. God gives good gifts...they are continually coming down. God is not capricious in his giving. He doesn't offer good gifts one moment then withhold them the next. God is unchanging without variation or shifting shadows. No waffling. No indecision. His light of truth is strong and steady guiding us to the right path, the right choice. He is good.

If I am going to be able to stand strong and face the temptations of life, I must believe that the goodness of God is greater then lures and delights of the lies whispered in my ear. God is good. Do you believe that? If we truly did then it would be a tremendous antidote, a cure to extinguishing temptation.

Conversely, every time that I give in to temptation and sin, my actions reveal that I really don't believe in the goodness of God. I really refuse to receive His good gifts. I must believe that God is good and has provided for me everything that He wants me to have and everything that I need right now.

For example. I am in history class and beginning to sweat because I can't remember the name of the 36th president. I want to do well on the test. That is a legitimate desire. But if I cheat and look at my neighbors paper then what I am really believing is, "I want to appear smarter then I really am to my teachers, parents, friends". God was not good to me,

because he did not make me as smart as her, or as smart as I want to be. I am refusing to believe that God could be good in making me with the level of intelligence He crafted me with so I'm tempted to sin because I want to appear more intelligent without working for it. Or maybe I'm doing poorly on the test because I sinned and wasted my time and didn't study as I should have. I may be smart, but I want to appear more diligent than I really am. I refuse to believe that God in His goodness, might want me to fail and work on my character.

Perhaps you are tempted to have an emotional affair with another person who is not your spouse. Perhaps you are tempted to go further than you should before marriage commitment. You are tempted to sin because you doubt God's goodness. You may never say it, but you are really believing, "God is not good. He has not provided for me to satisfy a legitimate need, I've waited long enough, I have so I'm taking things into my own hands. Again, Refusal to believe that God is good has led you to temptation.

Whatever sin you are tempted I believe James is telling us that we need to renew our thinking about the goodness of God. Say for example, you are tempted to pump harmful substances into your body, which God calls the temple of the Holy Spirit. Temptation says to us, God is not good. Look what has happened to me. He doesn't really love me. I'm not worth much of anything so why don't I just go ahead and dull my pain. When we envy or even steal what others have, whether its things, position, reputation, money. Joy, rest. We are believing by our attitudes and actions that we don't think God is good. We want what we don't have which means we are believing that God has not provided for us what we decided we need and so we give into temptation because we believe that God is not good. Its surprising how fully understanding and believing that God is good applies to our standing strong against temptation.

Two men in the Old Testament struggled with temptation. King David up on his roof spied a beautiful woman taking a bath. He was

carried away and enticed by his own lust and lust conceived and gave birth to death...literally. The husband of that woman he killed and then their baby also died. When Nathan the prophet exposed him on his sin, He said in II Samuel 12:7-8 God gave you the kingdom, houses, wives, land. If there was something you wanted, he would have given it to you. Simply put, God was good to you and you didn't believe that, You didn't believe that God had provided for you all you needed to be satisfied and blessed. You didn't believe God was good, so you gave into the temptation, committed adultery and killed for it.

Joseph was another red-blooded man who was tempted. Joseph had been placed as the CEO of a wealthy general's estate. The general's wife had the hots for this handsome gifted man and repeatedly tried to seduce him. Joseph stood strong. Why? In Genesis 39:7 Joseph explains why he could not possibly give into that temptation. Because his master had withheld nothing from him except his wife. Joseph says, "how could I possibly sin against God in this way." Joseph saw that all blessings came from God and even though God had not given him at that time a wife to satisfy his natural desires, he believed that God was good and refused to take a short-cut of sin. He knew that God was good and had provided for him everything God knew he needed at that time.

See how our belief in the goodness of God is closely connected to standing strong in the face of temptation. God's goodness is indeed a surprising antidote to tackling temptation. But James is pretty clear, if I am going to be able to stand strong in the face of temptation, I must believe that the goodness of God is greater than my own perceived needs and desires. Something I would like us to do this next week "when" we are tempted. Would you let that temptation be a trigger. "I am being lied to in some way. Then reflect on the goodness of God. Think through how if you gave in to that temptation you would deny that God is good. I guarantee by the time you get through thinking all that the temptation will have past.

So far in this chapter one James has said, vv1-12 God is wise, follow him and endure in trials. Vss 13-17 God is good, trust him and stand strong in the face of temptation. In verse 18 James reminds us of one more important thing when facing our trials and temptations. We are no longer who we used to be...so stop acting like it. "In the exercise of His will (God's choice) He brought us forth (literally he gave birth). That is a whole lot different kind of birth then up in v.15. This is a spiritual rebirth, believers who are born again. We are men and women made new by the Word of Truth so we ought to act like it.

Shortly after Augustine became a Christian, a woman that he once lived with called out to him as he walked down the street, but he did not answer. She persisted and finally ran up to him and said, "Augustine, it is I". To which he replied, "I know, but it is no longer I." When God redeems us He changes us from the inside out and we are no longer who we used to be. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things have past away behold new things come. The spirit of God uses the Word of god to do the miracle of God which is new birth. Romans 10:17 "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

These early believers James writes to were the first fruits of what God wants to do in saving men. Each year in Old Testament Israel people would bring the first of their produce and offer them in sacrifice to the Lord. It was a sign that the whole of their crops belonged to God. It was the first and finest and best of what was to be offered. We can stand strong in temptation because God is good. We can endure under trials and look past them to see Gods wisdom because God is wise and good. We are able approach life with radically different thinking because we are no longer who we used to be. Those of us here who are believers are new creatures, no longer who we used to be. We are then called to walk in faith. The ability to endure under trials, or stand strong under temptation is not three easy steps its about faith in God and living really believing like who God is; God is good. God is wise. And those who are

believers are have been reborn and no longer who we used to be. Perhaps you have never made that decision to follow God. But today for the first time you see God, you believe in Him and want to receive His forgiveness, His very good gift.