

Seoul Grace Community  
The Book of James: A Blueprint for Making Faith Work  
“The Birth of Temptation and Sin”  
James 1:12-18

**1. Introduction**

- a. James starts his letter looking at the topic of temptation and sin to help us start examining how the Christian faith gets lived out in practice
- b. The Book of James is often criticized for being “works-based”—the idea that we must earn our salvation through doing good deeds
  - i. But it’s actually a wisdom book for right living in light of our salvation by grace through Jesus Christ
  - ii. He doesn’t blend the words for “works” and “law” so he’s arguing for something entirely different than Paul and other New Testament writers
    1. His usage of “works” (erga) is concerning moral effort as an expression of convictions (Luke Timothy Johnson)
  - iii. James essentially asks the question—you’re saved by grace, but does that grace change you?
    1. Bonhoeffer: “Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” “Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man’ will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.” “Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: “ye were bought at a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us.”

**2. The Product of Testing and The Problem of Temptation**

- a. Testing is FOR us, the product is a life where we grow spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, etc.
  - i. James Says “blessed” is the person who endures testing and trials (v. 12)—assumes the existence of testing in our live (says “when” not “if”)
  - ii. Testing is for us
    1. Test—God gives this meant to improve us
    2. Many examples throughout Scripture shows that God’s test are meant to be instructive/constructive rather than destructive (Abraham, Job, Jesus, here in James 1)
- b. Temptation is FROM us
  - i. Says don’t be “deceived” because God is not culpable for our temptations to sin (cf. v. 13)
    1. We only sin because we desire it. Nothing causes us to sin. We do it.
    2. Don't confuse the occasion for sin for the cause for sin. The cause is within us. The occasion is just the opportunity.
    3. He uses a sexual or sensual metaphor. Giving birth after being seduced. Birth to desire. Evil desire. Greek word is used throughout New Testament (epithymia).
      - a. This is an “over-desire” for something in our lives which sits at the “epi”-center of our hearts
      - b. Temptation and Sin work in that not do we just want bad things, but that we want things *too badly* (even “good” things in our lives such as work, family, companionship, respect, etc.).

- c. It's an over desire. Sin is more than just breaking rules. It's always likened to spiritual adultery.
- ii. It leads to conception. Something inside you that will give birth later. What's inside will eventually come outside. Our over desires give birth to the outward manifestation of something. You lied. But what gave birth to that? An over desire for something inside us. Maybe fear. Or something else inside us.
- iii. You now need to ask—how does this lead to my “death?” If it’s just a menial sin after all.
- iv. It gives birth to death. We become obsessed with whatever we have put at the epicenter of our hearts and therefore lose ourselves to it (the need for companionship leads to sins outside of marriage, the need for approval through work leads to over work and frustration, etc. etc).

### 3. A New “Epi” Desire, A Beautiful Object

- a. What do we do about this?
  - i. It's not just about saying “no” to temptation. It's such much more nuanced.
  - ii. It’s about finding a new object of greater beauty in our lives than the beauty we’ve bestowed on all of our other “over-desires” in life
- b. Chalmers. "THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION".
  - i. And it is the same in the great world. We shall never be able to arrest any of its leading pursuits, by a naked demonstration of their vanity. It is quite in vain to think of stopping one of these pursuits in any way else, but by stimulating to another. In attempting to bring a worldly man intent and busied with the prosecution of his objects to a dead stand, we have not merely to encounter the charm which he annexes to these objects - but we have to encounter the pleasure which he feels in the very prosecution of them. It is not enough, then, that we dissipate the charm, by a moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. We must address to the eye of his mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences, and to engage him in some other prosecution as full of interest, and hope, and congenial activity, as the former.
- c. 17 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. 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.
  - i. James 1:17 says that with God there "is no variation or shadow due to turning"
  - ii. The word here implies someone looking at you and then turning their back to you and casting their shadow on you. This would be like shunning someone—turning away from them.
  - iii. This phrase means that God will never, despite how it might feel during suffering, turn his back on you
  - iv. Why? Because James knows that on the cross God turned his back on his only Son—so much so that Jesus shouts "why have you forsaken me?" and the sky becomes black with shadows.
  - v. God turned his back on his only Son for you! And James here says that He will never turn his back on you! You'll never see God's shadow because he already showed it to his Son, Jesus on the cross in order to save you and me
- d. We have to continually pull Jesus into the center of our affection. Jesus gave his life. He was the husband. He wants no other lover for us. He was stripped so that we can be clothed. He was killed so that we live.
- e. This is how to begin to resist the growing temptation in our hearts—to see something more beautiful in life than whatever it is we find ultimately beautiful now
  - i. It's not just about saying “no” to temptation because will power will eventually fail us (don’t we all know this to be true?)
  - ii. We have to see something more beautiful. Him. Jesus—dying for us to bring us back into intimacy with him. Get enraptured by this and you’ll begin to handle temptation because, by grace, He handles it for you!