



JAMES—A STUDY (PART THREE)
CHAPTER 1 VERSES 12 TO 27

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This is the third in a series of messages on the book of James. The previous messages can be found on our “Messages” page at www.thewellhonduras.org

Chapter 1 Verse 12

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. (James 1:12 KJV) Who is blessed? Only the one who endures temptation and perseveres in trial. The truth is that **many times God will not take us out of our trials. However he is always with us in the midst of the trial.** So we should persevere, doing the will of God, keeping our heart open to Him. That’s difficult at times. If we’ve been hurt, it can be hard to keep our heart open to other people; and in a similar way our trials can make it hard for us to keep our heart open to God. But by doing so we give God the opportunity to mold and shape us into His true servants.

This verse mentions temptation and trial together, because whenever you find yourself in a difficult situation, you will also be tempted. Biblically we see the example of Job, who suffered so much: he lost nearly all his family, all his possessions, had a terrible illness, and lost his good reputation amongst his friends. As these powerful trials descended upon his life he was assailed by the temptation to doubt God’s love; to believe Satan’s lies, “God is not love. If he loved you he wouldn’t let you be tried like this. Or maybe He’s too weak or indifferent to protect you.” Job was tempted to doubt God’s love and therefore to speak badly of Him. But he endured the temptation, even when it came through the words of his own wife. He responded by planting his feet on this truth: “I know that God loves me in spite of everything and thus I will not speak ill of Him.” At times a child of loving parents may say to them, “You don’t love me!” In other words, “If you loved me, you wouldn’t treat me like this.” The parents’ efforts to raise their child in a way that will be most beneficial for him in the long run are interpreted by the child as hate or indifference and not love. Likewise at times due to our trials we are tempted to doubt the love of our loved ones and speak badly of them; and moreover to treat God in the same way.

With every trial comes temptation. Another example is that of the union between man and woman. God created marriage; it was His idea that men marry women. And God created sex, as a wonderful gift to be enjoyed within marriage. It’s God’s idea, not the world’s. So, it should be God that gives you your husband or wife, as He did with Adam and Eve. Some say, “Yes, but I can’t bear waiting any longer. I’m going to get together with this person because I can’t wait around for God to provide me with someone more appropriate.” Obviously it can be a difficult trial to remain single for a time and wait for God to provide you with your spouse. For a start, it’s hard to be single in a world which screams “Sex, sex, sex” from every available media. It’s difficult trial to keep yourself pure and wait. So together with the trial comes this temptation: “Forget about your principles and get together with this person, they’re so attractive! You can’t keep on living like this, single and separated from this person!” Or, “God wants you to be happy. So why wait!” These are examples of how the devil speaks. But blessed is the man or woman who endures temptation, the one who says “no!” in spite of the pressure he feels in body and soul to take Satan’s shortcuts.

**MANY TIMES GOD
WILL NOT TAKE
US OUT OF OUR
TRIALS.**

Blessed is the person who says, "I'm going to wait, I'm going to trust in God that in His time he'll provide me my spouse, if that's His will." The majority of people marry; few have to stay single their whole lives.

Those that do require a special gift from God to be able to live like that. So it's best to wait, and meanwhile to endure the temptations and persevere in the trial, knowing that later you will enjoy the blessing of God.

FEEL IT OR NOT,
YOU ARE
LOVED BY GOD

Chapter 1 Verse 13 to 15

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 (James 1:13) God permits, and at times He sends, the trials in your life. But He never sends temptation into your life. God is never the one who is tempting you. He is so good, upright, just and pure that he can't even be tempted to do wrong! Jesus Christ was indeed tempted when he became man. *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin... in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* (Hebrews 4:15, 2:18) God is absolutely pure and upright and cannot be tempted. But as a human being, no matter how holy a life you lead, you will always be tempted in some way. Jesus lived a perfectly holy life, but was frequently tempted. Taking the example of the union between man and woman, Jesus also chose to wait for God to give Him his Bride. The Bible says that various women followed Him, and I imagine that some of them were very attractive. In fact movies have been made alleging that He had a physical relationship with Mary Magdalene; which of course is an absolute lie because we know that He did not succumb to the temptation to take Satan's shortcuts. He chose to wait for God to give Him the Bride promised to Him in the Scriptures. And who is His Bride? The church. You and I. He didn't marry any woman here on earth because He was waiting for something infinitely, more full, more extensive: the church. Nevertheless, the temptation He felt must have been very strong at times. He understands how it feels to have to endure temptation in the midst of trial, thus He can help us.

So if God doesn't tempt us, who does? *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* (James 1:14) It's the lies of Satan that tempt us, but why is temptation so attractive to us? Because it entices and seduces the disorderly desires that live in our old man, our sinful nature; and those we permit to live in the areas of our thinking that are so far unrenewed by the truth of God. Disorderly desires are also known as lust, the disorderly appetites for sensual pleasures.

At this point it's important to clarify something doctrinally. Sensual pleasures are not in themselves bad. Nor is it bad to have an appetite for them. Sex, food, entertainment; these things are not wrong in themselves. God gave them to us so we could be free to enjoy them within the boundaries that He has delineated. They are bad when our appetite for these things is disorderly and hence their expression is not in line with God's character. Within the limits that God has given us to satisfy these desires, we have freedom and it glorifies God when we enjoy them. For example, married couples have the freedom to enjoy their physical relationship and should cultivate it. While it's sin for anyone to have a sexual relationship (or imagine one) with someone they are not married to, because in this context the sexual appetite is disorderly and they are acting outside God-given limits; the joy of having sex with your spouse within marriage is a good and wonderful thing created by God. I am clarifying this point because there are people who create an artificial separation between the "physical" and the "spiritual." They believe that you can become more spiritual by denying yourself all sensual pleasures, everything physical and material. They imagine themselves more spiritual if they deny themselves a full and free physical relationship with their spouse; or if they pray and read the Bible rather than taking time to watch a good movie with their family; or if they eat bread and water instead of pizza or ice-cream; or if they dress in drab clothes instead of something remotely fashionable. The bottom line is that these people believe that the body and sensual pleasures are not spiritual and that to be spiritual means to engage as little as possible in these things. That is a hellish lie which unfortunately has crept into the church in many guises; the truth is that whether we eat, drink, pray, fast, have sex; all these things should be done for the glory of God, because He created all of them. To the holy, these things are holy and glorifying to God. It is the disorderly desires of our old man that we have to die to, not the God-given desire to live as normal human beings. In fact, a good antidote against temptation is to enjoy to the full the legitimate pleasures that God has given you.

So, temptation comes from Satan but seduces the sinful desires that live in our old man. God wants everything to be done decently and in order, and when we satisfy our orderly desires (not our disorderly ones) we glorify Him.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:15) When we allow our disorderly sinful desires to join with temptation, they give birth to sin, which in turn gives birth to spiritual death.

SIN DESTROYS. Sin always destroys. Don't let the devil deceive you. Sin will always bring destruction into your life, sooner or later. There are no exceptions. So it's better to trust God and endure temptation, to receive and enjoy the blessings that God gives you, and not to allow the disorderly desires that live in your old man to join with the temptation and give birth to sin and death. If you have sinned, repent. Don't let the devil hold you down. You may have to bear some consequences, but God will forgive and redeem.

Chapter 1 Verses 16 to 21

Do not err, my beloved brethren. (James 1:16) We are beloved. You are loved by God! He loves you so much! And **you must interpret everything that happens to you based on this: I am LOVED.** Perhaps you don't feel loved. That's when you have to believe it, to walk by faith and not by sight.

Sometimes a new bride may say to her loving but inexperienced husband, "You don't love me!" Because in that moment she doesn't feel loved. And he responds, "Of course I love you! I told you so a few days ago!" This man needs to learn to understand his woman – she needs love to be expressed with more than just a few words now and again. She needs his help to feel loved. But equally the wife needs to learn that even though her husband does not always express his love like she would like him to, she needs to trust that he does in fact love her. There must be trust between the two. Many times, as the Bride of Christ, despite the many ways He may have shown His love to us, we do not feel loved by God. But that's when we need to trust. **Feel it or not, you are loved by God.** We must walk by faith and not by sight.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (James 1:17) God is good and He loves you, including in the midst of the trial. You must trust in that and not take shortcuts however tough the trial is. It says that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God. Every one of them, without exception. Many times we sin because we go about a good thing in a wrong way. Like I said, it's good for the man to have his woman and the woman to have her man. God gave us that desire. In view of this you might conclude, "Well then I'm going to get myself a spouse." But as you take things into your own hands in this way what you will receive may be good, but not the best for you. (Please note: This example has to do with people who are not yet married. If you have made a mistake in this area and find yourself married to someone you do not feel is ideal for you, I am not advocating that you separate. Your marriage vows are sacred before God, whoever you chose to marry and you should now seek to honor God in your marriage by loving your spouse.) **The good is the enemy of the best,** and at times we seek the good but don't allow God to give us the best. We don't like to wait. We don't like to be patient. We don't like to persevere because it hurts. But it's better to persevere, to have patience, to wait for God to give us the best. Not the good, but the best. So many people settle for less than what God has for them. Let's not do that. But it happens a lot. We need to hope in Him, and persevere in Him.

It says that God is *the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* The sun, that great burning ball of gas, is always the same. Its nature and its position never change; it will always be the same sun until God destroys it. At times it seems to us that it changes, because the clouds drift in front of it and create shadows. We speak of sunrise and sunset, but the sun doesn't move... it's the earth that moves. Just like the sun is in the natural world, so God is unchangeable, and our changes, including the shadows of trial that fall across our lives are not changes or alterations in Him. He is always the same. And just as the sun faithfully provides the light necessary for life to continue on earth, so God is faithful in His provision of grace and love to us, in His providence and His glory and infinitely more. The shadows of our trials make it seem like He has changed, that He is no longer looking out for us, but He is. We can trust in Him precisely because He never changes. Circumstances change.

**SIN ALWAYS
DESTROYS.**

Life is full of surprises and some of them are not pleasant ones. But God doesn't change. He is always with us and caring for us, even when it doesn't look like it.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18) We have seen that God is good and doesn't change. And it is this same good God who gave us birth as His beloved children. We are the best and most important of all the many creatures he has made, because we are His beloved children. God loves animals, fish and birds because He created them; but He doesn't love them like He loves us. We are His special creation, the pinnacle of all that He has made. He loves us so much.

**WE MUST
RESTRAIN OUR
HEART FROM
SETTLING INTO A
LIE, AND GUIDE IT
INTO TRUSTING
THE TRUTH.**

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19) "Wherefore" refers back to the previous point. Because we are His beloved children, and all that is good comes from Him, then even though we are in trials, even though there are shadows in our lives, the good God is with us; and trusting in that, we can be *quick to listen* to His voice, to hear what He wants to say to us in the middle of our trial. *Slow to speak*, that is, when we're tempted to believe that God has abandoned us, that He isn't good, and thus to accuse Him and speak ill of Him, we must be slow to express those thoughts; we must be careful to base our thoughts and thus our words on His truth. **At times we have to shut our mouth and choose to trust.** And *slow to wrath*. The truth is that when we become angry, it's usually because we feel that in some way we've been left to ourselves, that we are alone in our trial and not receiving the help we need. But as we trust in the presence of our God and hope in Him, that anger will have nowhere to take root.

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. (James 1:20) Often the wrath of man is based on a lack of trust that God is present and will provide the necessary help at the right time. But this anger is always destructive. Sometimes a wife may be going through the trial of a marriage where her husband is not at all sensitive to her or the children's needs. She may become angry and critical with him, nagging him to try to change him, and in fact this will cause him to become even more distant from her and the family because the wrath of man does not achieve God's righteous plans. Or she may choose to trust in God, praying for her husband that God will change him, seeking to love and respect him, and where appropriate sharing her feelings with him on the basis of this love and respect rather than criticizing him in anger. In other words, she can become angry or let God do the work.

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21) You must fill your mind with the truth of God found in the Bible, thus you will increasingly experience His powerful truth in your life. You will be changed and transformed.

Chapter 1 Verses 22 to 25

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (James 1:22-25) Our focus in these messages has been on trials, afflictions and difficulties; indeed this is the theme in which the book of James is framed. Life is of course so much more than trials; but it is so important for those of us who want to serve God to know how He wants us to deal with them. These verses remind us that in the midst of the trial we need to receive God's word and put it into practice, not being forgetful hearers. **Let's remember what we saw in the mirror:** that God is good, that He loves us, that we're His children. That we are to order our lives on that basis, and thus endure temptation and not submit to disorderly desires. That God will help us and be with us in the trial. And that after we have suffered a little while He will bless us.

Chapter 1 Verses 26 to 27

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (James 1:26) This is a very direct word. If you think you are a follower of Jesus, but don't restrain, keep in check, and properly guide your tongue, but rather allow your heart to be deceived by believing the lies of Satan, your religion is devoid of force and result; it is hollow and accomplishes nothing. You think you're religious but in fact are not; you have forgotten what you saw in the mirror of God's word.

The purpose of a bridle on a horse is not just to prevent it from going the wrong way, but also to guide it to go the right way. In the same way, to bridle the tongue means not just to prevent it from saying wrong things, but also to proactively use it to say right things. It's easier for some to bridle their tongues than for others. Some people are naturally more explosive and reactionary than others. God understands that, but does not permit any excuses, because His word states that every man (and that includes women) should be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.

So how do we bridle our tongue? **We start by bridling our heart.** We don't allow it to be deceived. Faced with difficulties, we refuse to accept the lies of Satan and instead choose to trust that God loves and is with us. We restrain our heart from settling into a lie, and guide it into trusting the truth. Then we choose to express the truth with our mouth.

Job is a perfect example of a man who bridled his tongue in the midst of an incredibly difficult time of trial. If you know his story, you know that God allowed Satan to steal everything but his wife from him. And his wife, at least in the early stages of the trial, served to make it heavier not lighter...

When he received the news that all his children were dead, and all his goods had been stolen or destroyed, how did Job react? *Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped.* 21 *And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away blessed be the name of the LORD."* 22 *In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.* (Job 1:20-22 ESV) Few people have suffered what Job suffered. One can almost hear the whisperings of Satan that must have come to him... "Where is your God now Job? You've served Him your whole life and look how He's repaid you! What was the point, Job? If He does even exist, what kind of God is He? It's vain to serve Him, Job!" Without doubt he was tempted to think like this. He had the opportunity to react like this but he didn't. He didn't sin by accusing God of wrongdoing. **Job acknowledged his pain, and bridled his tongue, choosing to trust and worship.** The Spanish word for worship is appropriately "adorar," to adore. Job literally adored God in the midst of the trial. In the midst of it all, he used his tongue to bless God.

So Satan asked God for permission to test Job even more; and God granted it. Soon Job found himself covered in sores, suffering a horrendous illness. I imagine that people didn't want to come near him due to the awful smell and sight. And moreover his wife, his helper, added fuel to the fire of his trial... *Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"* In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:9-10 ESV) Job's wife chose not to bridle her tongue, so her words were not very encouraging to her poor husband. She asked him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity?" We know that integrity means to persevere in trust and walk in that which God has spoken to us, whatever it costs. Job had been a man of integrity before the fateful day that Satan began to test him, and now in spite of the trials he continued to walk in that integrity. In fact his walk with God was about all he has left. But now his wife tempts him to throw even that away. "My dear, are you still so naïve as to continue to trust God and follow Him after all He's suddenly done to you? Forget about Him and cast Him aside just like He's forgotten about you and cast you aside!" His response? "My love, you're behaving like one of those foolish, ignorant women who doesn't think before she speaks, who churns out nonsense. I know things are so very difficult, as much for you as for me. But you need to acknowledge that God is with us and bridle your tongue."

We must not speak as Job's wife spoke. But remember, she suffered the same as him. The children who died were hers as well as his. Her life also lay in seeming ruins around her, all peace shattered. Now she sees her beloved husband suffering tremendous sickness. We may be quick to criticize her, but we should understand her, that she was going through an incredibly difficult trial, and that what she said came from the hurt in her heart. The words she spoke came from an unbridled heart, where the pain had been allowed to drown out the truth of God and provide a safe haven for the lies of Satan. Hence Job told her that she was speaking like a foolish woman - a woman who did not acknowledge the reality of God. **She could have expressed her pain as did Job, but not let it lead her into accusing God.** Job went on to say, *Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"* In all this Job did not sin with his lips. He did not sin with his lips because he did not sin in his heart.

HOW OFTEN ARE WE
TEMPTED TO
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How often in a trial, faced with the seeming impossibility of the situation, are we tempted to allow just a hint of accusation against God to creep into our hearts! Just a hint of “God, is this how you treat your servants, your beloved children? You’ve left me alone! This just isn’t right!” If we accept those lies, as did Job’s wife, we begin accusing God of negligence or wrongdoing, and hence we sin with our hearts and often with our words. But God calls us to something higher: to bridle our hearts and tongues by saying no to the lies, and trusting and adoring the God who loves us, who is with us, and who is trustworthy in spite of everything happening to us. Hence our religion will not be in vain but rather will bear fruit.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27 KJV) We’ve looked at vain, unfruitful religion, now we see something of what it means to practice pure and undefiled religion, not before men but rather before God.

A religion that is powerful and may not bring much praise from men but brings satisfaction to the heart of God. The word ‘fatherless’ here indicates ‘bereft of a father or orphaned, bereft of a teacher or guide.’ It’s difficult to be fatherless or orphaned, to be without one or both parents to provide that stabilizing, caring, guiding influence. It’s difficult to be a widow, to have had the presence and comfort of a husband and now to be without. Orphans and widows live an affliction, a trial that at times is very difficult and painful. Even though they may be Christians, with the constant presence of Jesus Christ, the trial is still painful. God’s specific command for us to visit this kind of person highlights the truth, contrary to some popular teaching, that even those who have Jesus Christ still have to go through painful trials. It also indicates that by visiting those who are living through trials and afflictions in this world, we reflect and express the character of God, who does not leave us alone in the midst of our trials but rather cares for us in them. He’s with us in them; he visits us, he comforts us by His Spirit and through His word, He expresses His great love to us, often through the kindness of brothers and sisters in Christ. He visits us!

Pure religion also includes *keeping [ourselves] unspotted from the world.* The world wants to stain us in many ways, to dirty our testimony. It whispers and screams at us that God is not real, or that He is distant and untrustworthy and not worth serving. But we mustn’t believe its lies or embrace its foolish perspective; rather we must believe and embrace what our Heavenly Father says. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him.

God wants a people who persevere in the face of trial, trusting and loving Him. A people who bridle their hearts and tongues, using them to bless and not curse. A people who speak the truth in love. A true reflection of the Love that created the universe and beyond, and yet numbers the very hairs on our heads. Let’s be that people. Amen.

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“IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK”- JESUS
(JOHN 7:37)