

CHAPTER II

THE WAGES OF THE WISE

James 1:2-15

TRIALS PRODUCE STEADFASTNESS

Text 1:2-4

2. Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations:
3. Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience.
4. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

Queries

7. Is it really fun to be tempted? Should it be? In what sense would it be wrong to have pleasure in temptation?
8. To the sincere Christian who hates both the thought and practice of sin, wherein is the joy?
9. What is the real meaning of "patience?" Use a good Bible dictionary or commentary. . . . look it up!
10. There is a progression of four qualities in these verses. The first of the four leads to the second, etc. What are the four, and the relationship between them?
11. In what sense could a work be called a "perfect" work? (you might profit by looking up the word "perfect" in a Bible dictionary. Also look it up in an English dictionary and note how the word often has a different meaning today.)
12. In the light of the possible good results of temptation herein described, why did Jesus, in describing the manner of our prayer, say: "Lead us not into temptation?"
13. What ordinary part of an epistle is here omitted? (i.e., why do we classify this as a "general epistle?")

Paraphrases

- A. 2. When you are subjected to the many kinds of temptations, my

fellow Christians, look on it from the bright side, as if it were joy;

3. for the result of the temptation that is resisted is that you have passed the test and are approved. This victorious testing results in in a bulldog tenacity.
 4. And, in order that you may become completed and accomplished, having everything worthwhile, continue to hang on like a bulldog and you will finish the course.
- B. 2. Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? They be happy,
3. For when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow.
 4. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete.

Comment

Often the right use of affliction is of more value than the removal of that affliction. If God sees fit not to remove the affliction, then we can only count that the right use of the affliction *must* be of value. Thus, if out of some affliction we have only grief and sorrow, an occasion of sinning, a stumbling and faltering; but see no profit and no blessing, then, we must have been missing some opportunity. The opportunity may have been growth through resistance of sin; or it may yet be, as with Christ, preparation to have sympathy and compassion on others who have like sufferings; or it may be, as with Paul, the apostle, that we learn all the more to depend upon God's grace. To really know that God's grace is sufficient, might give us such an understanding of the grace of God as to make us far more effective teachers and workers for the Lord.

Intense pressure on common carbon makes diamonds. Likewise, the trial of one grace may produce another grace of even more value. While producing patience in you, God may be producing a diamond for this darkened world; and through the trial of your faith, He thus forms one of the most valuable jewels in His kingdom! God's ability to do the impossible, through the most unlikely subjects, is a continual and amazing demonstration of His grace in molding and

making us. No wonder I am asked to look upon affliction as if it were nothing but joy!

God allows our faith to be tested with the expectation that we shall be approved when the test is completed. "Proving" here has that meaning. It is this successful trial of our faith that results in a bulldog tenacity to hang on. "Patience" is the concept of hanging on with a grip that will not let go. It is much more than long-suffering, and has no connection with a humble submission to any circumstance. Rather, it is the *I-shall-not-be-moved* attitude.

If we continue to hold out under all circumstances (literally, the word patience means to "hold out under"), without wavering, but hanging on unto the end, then, patience will have its complete (perfect) work. This will result in our gaining approval and being purified, as with a trial of fire. It will result in our gaining the crown of life. Its result will be that we shall gain every bit of the spiritual blessing and heavenly promise God has in store for us. Patience, then, can be said to be closely associated with our will. We *choose* to hang on. Without this continuous spirit of steadfastness, it is very unlikely that we shall finish the course, for both the temptations of the devil and the circumstances of this life are very much against the unstable man's continuing to the end without being led off course.

James is not in this section saying that temptation is good, nor that it is pleasure, but looking to the result of the successful trial, we look upon temptation as if it were joy. The temptation to sin should still be avoided and we should shun even its appearance. Satan will see to it, however, that we are not successful in our effort to shun every temptation. When it cannot be avoided, then, we should tenaciously hang on to Christ with a view to the end when He shall say to us, "Well done." There are other kinds of sufferings we face that may not, necessarily, be temptations to sin. Yet, these too are temptations, by the very fact that our suffering is involved.

God has given us the promise that we shall not be tempted beyond our ability to resist. (I Cor. 10:13) Perhaps on the judgment day, we shall realize as never before that every sin we have committed is of our doing (Jas. 1:13,14), and that we have absolutely no room for blaming God for even the circumstances that led us to sin. These very circumstances are God's efforts to make us grow and become approved, not to make us sin.

TRUE WISDOM IS GOD-GIVEN

Text 1:5-8

5. But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
6. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed.
7. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord;
8. A doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.

Queries

14. Why say "If any of you lack wisdom?" Is there an implication here that some people have sufficient wisdom, and a few may lack wisdom? Is it not true that all men need more wisdom in God's service? Why the "if?"
15. "Liberally" can have meanings other than abundantly. Use an English dictionary and find some other possibilities.
16. Without looking up any references or other Scriptures, write down your concept of the meaning of "upbraideth not." Having done this, try to determine if your present concept is correct. Use a Bible dictionary or commentary as well as other Scriptures. If you were wrong the first time, be sure to write down any correction you may wish to make. (This will fix the new meaning in your mind.)
17. Is faith a general and necessary aspect of prayer? True, it is mentioned here in connection with prayer, but is this a general teaching concerning the linkage of prayer and faith throughout the N. T. ? (see Matt. 21:21; Mark 11:23; Rom. 4:20; 14:23; James 5:15; and Heb. 11:6.)
18. In what way is a doubter like a surge of the sea (v. 6) ?
19. Are not all of us driven by circumstances of environment, even as a wave of the sea? Why should we be "blamed" for this any more than a wave could be blamed for being tossed about?
20. Why say this man who is like a wave is "double" minded? To what can this "double" mind refer?

21. Is there any similarity or contrast between the patient-minded man of verses 2-4 and the double-minded man of verse 8? How would you compare them?
22. Does verse 5 end with a promise that God will give to us that for which we ask? If this is true, would it not be dangerous to pray? How could we pray without fear and trembling if God grants us the object of our prayer? (i.e., suppose we, in innocent ignorance, should ask for many things that are harmful to us. Is not this an actual fact in your own experience?)
23. How can it be said that God will not give that man anything (v. 7), when God pours out His blessings upon all men. . . . upon the just and the unjust alike?
24. Are people who are unstable in some of their ways, necessarily unstable in *all* their ways? Is it not possible to be doubtful, or unable to make up our minds on *some* issues, and yet be very stable on other issues? How do we harmonize this with the teaching of v. 8?

Paraphrases

- A. 5. But if any of you need wisdom in order to continue with this tenacious spirit of a bulldog, then ask God for this wisdom. God gives to all men with an unmixed benevolence that does not resent your asking. Ask wisdom of God, and God will give it to you.
 6. But let him ask believing that God will grant his request. He that cannot make up his mind is like a wave that is blown and tossed about and never gets anywhere.
 7. If a man is like that wave, he will not get anywhere with God, either.
 8. A man who has two conflicting purposes in life, is confused on every issue he faces, and in everything he does.
- B.*5. If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask Him, and He will gladly tell you, for He is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask Him; He will not resent it.
 6. But when you ask Him, be sure that you really expect Him to tell you, for a doubtful mind will be as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.
 - 7,8. And every decision you then make will be uncertain, as you

turn first this way, and then that. So if you don't ask in faith, don't expect the Lord to give you any solid answers.

Summary

God does not leave us to flounder, for He wants us to ask him if we need more wisdom. Of course, we should ask, believing it will happen, or else we will be confused in all our planning and deeds.

Comment

"If any man lack knowledge, let him go to college." But wisdom is an entirely different matter. Good teachers may impart to us facts of life, whether of this earthly life or of the spiritual life, in such a way that we can recall these facts and repeat them when necessary. Having learned these facts, we may be enabled to make good grades in school, or to carry on a fascinating conversation. We may be enabled to use the facts in such a way as to demonstrate our ability to recall them. But this is not wisdom.* (see below) Wisdom is more than just the use of knowledge. . . . it is the *practical* use of knowledge. Thus, wisdom is the ability to use knowledge in such a way that it brings benefit to the kingdom of God, to our fellow man, and to our own way of life.

A good teacher may lead us in the way of wisdom, but a good teacher cannot impart wisdom to us. Wisdom is not contained in a list of facts to be learned, but rather in a process, a way of living. Thus, we speak of those who have "common horse-sense" (although often it is not so common!)

To continue steadfastly in the way of the Lord, hanging on in spite of all trials and temptations, will take wisdom. We need the ability to keep the end result in mind when it is momentarily lost from sight. We need the ability to keep our life focused on Jesus when the devil has us surrounded with the filth of this life. We need the ability to bear up under spiritual growing pains, to ever be able to recall the temporary nature of sensual pleasures, to see through the camouflage of things seen to the real nature of things not seen. We cannot walk in the way of Christ without motivation; and without wisdom, motivation fades.

Wisdom, although in a measure may come from experience,

*Wisdom is the ability to *apply these facts to practical living.*

comes more as a God-given blessing. Having identical experiences, some may end up with wisdom while others have no wisdom. The difference is a blessing and a grace. The difference is God-Given. If one knows his need of wisdom (all men need some wisdom, but not all men know they need it!) then, let him ask of God. The Perfect Teacher (Christ) can do for us what the good teacher cannot do. He not only can impart to us the way of righteousness, but He can *lead* us in the paths of righteousness. To know, takes knowledge. But to know what to do, takes wisdom.

The liberality of God is evident everywhere. Witness the long-suffering of God with those who refuse to repent. God does not say, "He had his chance," but rather, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how *often* would I . . ." God is not content with giving an opportunity. He gives *opportunities*. He is not content to give a blessing, He gives *blessings*. If God pours out His blessings even upon the unjustified, how much more will He bless those who are justified in Christ. If those of this earth are granted a measure of earthly wisdom, how much more will God give to His children who ask Him for wisdom! So often we seek wisdom from an inadequate source. Some of the greatest teachers in the secular colleges of this earth still flounder without the wisdom of God. Man, with all his scientific studies, can at best only offer an inadequate description of his meager observations of God's created world. If you need wisdom, seek it from the real source: God, the giver of wisdom.

This giving God is a God of real love. He gives simply, with a single purpose: profit to the receiver of the gift! He gives without any strings attached. This is the first meaning of "liberality". Yet in Matt. 6:22 and Luke 11:34 the singleness of liberality seems to take on an aspect of opposing evil (Perhaps this is another way of saying the double-minded man is evil!) There is no hidden purposes with God's gifts. He gives because He loves us and not because of hidden benefits. He expects to receive. God is lavish in His gifts (especially of wisdom), so let us ask of the giving God who gives without any strings attached!

Since God gives without any hidden and subtle motivations of a selfish nature, then He is not thwarted in His giving. He has no reason to "rub it in" once He has given. He "upbraideth not."

Upbraiding is a selfish, human trait that is ungodly, unlovely, and unbecoming of any man. This is the practice of "throwing it up" to the man who received the gift. Upbraiding seems to say, "I

wanted something to hold over your head. . . . and now I have it, and I'm not going to let you forget it!" Upbraiding seems to say, "I have a great psychological need so that I can feel superior. I am not superior until I have given to you; but now that you have received of me you owe me the privilege of gloating."

The good deed of a gift is blemished by "throwing it up" to the person who received the gift. (Eccl. 18:15-18) A constant reminder to the grateful receiver of a gift can become far more inconvenient than the lack of the gift would have been in the first place. Perhaps this "rubbing it in" is one of the reasons gifts from the greatest giving nation in the world have not always been appreciated. The wise man gives the same way as God: he upbraideth not. (Eccl. 41:22)

So often are we cautioned in the Scriptures to pray, "Thy will be done," that it certainly becomes clear our wisdom is no match for God's wisdom. What we think we desperately need is often seen by God to be the exact thing we do not need. We should seek from God that which we desire with the reservation that He grant to us that which is best for us, even if it means denying us the object of our prayer. We count it an answer to prayer when God in His wisdom says, "No, my grace is sufficient for you." Sufficiency is often better than a spoiling over-abundance. Yet there seems to be no such limitations on our request for wisdom.

We are told, "It shall be given him." To ask in faith, nothing doubting, seems to say in this place: "Ask, believing God will give you the wisdom you request; and make your plans accordingly. God *will* give it to you!" This would then be more than an affirmation that God would hear our prayer: God will grant our request! However, we must point out that the wisdom promised here is for a particular purpose. It is wisdom so that we might be able to hang on to Christ without wavering so that we can be built up in him, having no spiritual need. God is not here promising an ability to make more money than we need. Here God is not saying we shall know how to succeed in politics with this given wisdom. He is not granting us wisdom to find "loopholes in the law of grace" and so plan our lives that we (being self-deceived) think we can willfully live the life of sin and get away with it. He is not promising us wisdom to become the devil's servants. We can do all this without wisdom. We need the wisdom that we might let steadfastness have its complete work, thus fully completing us in Christ.

My brother, is this the wisdom you want? Does your soul hunger and thirst after righteousness? Do you wish to be bound to Christ with a love that will not be broken? Do you wish to know how to stick to Him and never give up? Then ask God for His wisdom. You have His promise. He will give it.

If Abraham had been like this doubter in verse 6, he would have had a very difficult time making up his mind to leave Ur. Having left Ur and buried his father in Haran, he might have then returned to Ur, being uncertain as to whether or not God really meant what He said. Also, he would be filled with turmoil not knowing whether or not God really would keep His promises. The doubt of Abraham (thank God, he didn't doubt, but was unwavering in His confidence in the promises of God) in this supposed example would have filled his mind with indecision and uncertainty and would have shown up in his very life as complete instability.

The doubter is here at variance with himself, unable to decide whether or not, or to what extent, he should put personal confidence in God. This is opposed to the faithful man here, who has confidence in God to the extent he believes God knows and God cares; and with this confidence he is ready to surrender to God's knowledge and care. The man of faith does not have to know all the answers himself, for he has confidence in God. To say, "I don't know what is best." may be an expression of faith rather than doubt. If one admits his own inability to know the answers, yet has confidence in the answers God gives him, this man has faith. He has a source of absolute truth. He can build his life on an unshakable rock. He is not to be compared with the doubting man who says: "I do not know the answers, and I'm not certain that God knows the answers In fact, I'm not sure there are answers."

Or, to say again, "I do not know the answers. God does know the answers, I am sure; and it is rather sad that man is so far removed from God that he can have no way of knowing, beyond doubt, what to do to become or to remain satisfactory in His sight," is to again express doubt. Whether this attitude should come from an intellectual skeptic or from one who is constantly at variance with himself, the result is the same: a willfully wavering man whose request for wisdom is not granted. Perhaps, it is not granted because his own willful doubt shows he does not really wish it to be granted. Such a one is warned that he has no right to think "that a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways, shall receive any-

thing of the Lord." (Marginal reading, A.S.V.) God's promise of heaven is not given to those who show they do not want heaven. Likewise, His promise of wisdom in steadfastness is not given to those who show they do not *want* to be faithful.

THE ANTICIPATION OF THE RICH AND LOWLY

Text 1:9-11

9. But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate:
10. and the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.
11. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so shall the rich man fade away in his goings.

Queries

25. How could a Christian be a brother of "low degree"? (To find the correct answer in this passage, search these few verses to find with what this brother of low degree is contrasted.)
26. With whom is the high estate of this brother of low degree associated? (Phil. 3:14)
27. If this brother is poverty stricken, doing menial work that pays very little; and has met other personal misfortunes in his life, how can it be said he has a "high estate"? (Give several ways in which this estate is tremendous. You might want to look up "estate" in the dictionary.)
28. If the rich man of verse 10 is a Christian Brother, then in what way is he "made low?"
29. If the rich man is not a Christian, how is he made low?
30. Which seems more likely, that this rich man is a Christian, or not? (Note what is to pass away. Will it be his riches that pass away and the man himself remain forever with Christ, or is it indicated that the man shall pass away with his riches?)
31. Do you think riches are really a danger to most Christians? (i.e., if they had riches, do you think this might endanger their souls? see James 2:1 ff, 2:6-8; 5:1-6; Luke 1:48, 1:51-53; 16:

- 19-31; 18:18; Matt. 6:19-21; Job 24:22-24; 27:19ff.; Psalm 49:16-20.) What of *you*?
32. Why do you think "flower of the grass" is used as an illustration, rather than the passing away of this earth? (Isn't it true that this earth shall also pass away?)
33. See if you can find another expression for the term: "Grace of the fashion of it."
34. Does the phrase "in his goings" imply anything about when the rich man is likely to "fade away?" Do you think most people finish all the "going" they would like to do, or intend to do, before they die?

Paraphrases

- A. 9. But let the Christian brother who is humiliated by the circumstances of this life rejoice in what he has already received of the spirit and in what he is due to inherit from God.
10. But the rich man (if he thinks he can!), let him rejoice in the fact that he shall have no inheritance because as any green herbage will wither away when scorched by the hot sun and dehydrated by the thirsty wind, he too shall wither away. (He cannot take it with him!).
11. For when the boiling sun and the hot wind come, they wither the grass; and the flower of the grass wilts and falls, and the majestic beauty of its appearance is completely destroyed: in the same way shall the rich man with his experiences and fortunes perish while still on the move.
- B.*9. A Christian who doesn't amount to much in this world should be glad, for he is great in the Lord's sight.
- 10,11. But a rich man should be glad that his riches mean nothing to the Lord, for he will soon be gone, like a flower that has lost its beauty and faded away, withered—killed by the scorching summer sun. So it is with rich men. They will soon die and leave behind all their busy activities.

Summary

While the Christian can rejoice in heaven to come, the rich man's wealth will buy none of it. Although it may take a few years longer,

his riches shall fade just as surely as the grass fades; and then he will have nothing.

Comment

Poverty is often a blessing, for the poor man in this world's goods more easily recognizes his need of spiritual help. The rich man, feeling a sufficiency in material things, will often feel that he can buy his own way in any circumstance. Therefore, he will be reluctant to seek the favor of gifts from any man, and will be unlikely to seek grace from God. He is independent and self-sufficient. He will pay his own way. What he needs, he will buy, or with clever manipulations, take it from others. He does not ask for gifts because none wish to give to the man who already has a superfluous supply of this world's goods. Although dying of spiritual starvation, he does not even know his hunger.

The brother of low degree is, no doubt, the Christian who has little of this world's goods; but such a one is fortunate indeed. Being a Christian, he is saved, redeemed, reconciled, adopted, sanctified; he is a child of God, an heir of God's heavenly fortunes, and a joint-heir with Christ. An innumerable host of heavenly creatures await him at "home": Christ has gone ahead to prepare a mansion for him; his happiness will be complete, with no tears, sorrows, heartaches nor death. The riches of this world are nothing when compared with the "chain of jewels," inherited by the Christian.

The rich man *can* go to heaven. It will not be because of his riches, but in spite of his riches. His wealth will be a constant source of temptations, for "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil". He doesn't have to love his money, however: he can love Christ first of all. Zachaeus was rich (Luke 19:2). Many of Jesus' friends seemed to be people of material success. Joseph of Arimathaea, Barnabas, Nicodemus, Mary (sister of Lazarus), and the women of Galilee.

The general tendency, however, is that explained in Mark 10:25. It is so difficult for a rich man to overcome the temptations of his riches that he is unable to see beyond the love of his riches . . . except for the help of God. Yet with God, all things are possible. The will of man is so involved in God's using the rich man, that much of Jesus' teaching seems to be directed here. (See Matthew 6:19-34; 19:16-30; Luke 12:15-21; 16:9-31; Mark 10:24. Compare with I.

40. If God cannot be tempted with evil, then how was Jesus tempted?
41. Since God Himself tempts no man, harmonize this with the fact that Jesus was *driven of the spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted. (Mark 1:12)
42. Explain how the warning in verse 13 has a real vital purpose with most of us.
43. What does God promise the Christian regarding the extent of his temptations? (see I Cor. 10:12,13)
44. Does the source of temptation here contradict the general New Testament teaching that the devil tempts man to sin? How do you harmonize the two ideas? (Consider who we must really *blame* for our falling into sin.)
45. For harmonious relationship of this teaching with the rest of the New Testament, compare verses 13 and 14 with Roman 7:8, 10, 13, 17; Heb. 11:17, and I Cor. 10:9. Make a note of the common teachings in these passages.
46. What is the contrast between verses 13 and 15? (This has to do with *responsibility* for man's failure.)
47. When two factors are united, they often cause particular results. there are three sets of double factors, with the results of each given. In V. 14 and 15. What are these three sets and the results of each?

Paraphrases

- A. 12. Happy is the man that remains faithful to God through temptations to sin, for in the end he shall receive that which the Lord has promised to such a one: the crown of life.
 13. No man should blame God when he is tempted to do wrong. God cannot be tempted to do wrong Himself, nor does He tempt any man.
 14. Rather every man should blame himself for his temptation, for such temptation is possible only through the lustful desires that are within him.
 15. When a man gives in to these desires to do wrong, sin results: and sin leads to death.
- B.* 12. Happy is the man who doesn't give in and do wrong when he

is tempted, for afterwards he will get as his reward the crown of life that God has promised those who love Him.

13. And remember, when someone wants to do wrong, it is never God who is tempting him, for God never wants to do wrong and never tempts anyone else to do it.
14. But temptation is the pull of man's own evil thoughts and wishes.
15. Then the evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to the death penalty from God.
16. So don't be misled, dear brothers.

Summary

The devil, not God, tempts us to sin, and he does so only through our own desires to do evil. Thus, we should never blame God for the temptation to sin. God doesn't want us to sin, for He punishes sin with death.

Comment

Two destinies of man are set forth in this section: the blessed happy state of those who love God, and the state of death which is inherited by those who bear the penalty for sin. This happy (blessed) state is evidently a result of anticipation of the crown to be received, with this crown being symbolic of the "high estate" of verse 9 (see comments on this verse). Note, however, that this crown is a gift that is *conditioned*. It has been promised to those who love God, with this love evidently being demonstrated by endurance of temptation. If one is not willing to so demonstrate his love for God, then, he should not expect God to approve his workless faith.

The King James version "when he is tried" of verse 12 is not quite the correct meaning of the original. The idea is more than a trial . . . it concerns a person who, when tried, has been proved genuine. To take the test is not enough, the course must be passed! The idea of enduring temptation is that one bears the temptation and remains faithful. This does not necessarily mean that if one is overcome while he is fighting, he is lost. The basic question is: "Whose side are you on?" The Christian who errs hates his error, for he loves God's ways. Even though he may have done wrong, he is still on God's side, and he continues to fight sin. He desires to repent and seeks help from God. If he does not feed and support these spiritual desires, then

he may be completely overcome by sin. Since errors must be overcome through repentance and a seeking of forgiveness from God, some who backslide never recover. The Christian who delays repentance and continues in sin, is walking with one foot (and possibly both) in hell, and there is no hope for him while he continues in such a state. (Heb. 6:6)

There are three or four basic reasons why the Christian must overcome his trials and temptations. (1) He loves God, and to sin violates this basic desire to please God. (2) He realizes that remaining faithful during temptation leaves one stronger than he was, and this may be a means of growing in spirituality and tenacity (patience). (3) He wants to avoid above all else the hopeless condemnation that awaits those who willfully continue in sin. (4) He looks forward with joyful anticipation to the crown of life to be received by those who do endure.

The hope for the crown of life expressed in verse 12 culminates a process described in verses 2-4. Note the progress: verses 2-4, temptation resisted leads to proving of faith; proving of faith leads to patience; and patience leads to hope for the crown of life (v. 12). Notice how this parallels the declaration of Paul.

James has in 1:12

Paul has in Rom. 5:3-5

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|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Temptation | 1. Tribulation |
| 2. Endurance (Proving of faith) | 2. Steadfastness |
| 3. Approved | 3. Approvedness |
| 4. Hope (for a crown of life) | 4. Hope |

This explains one end of temptation, but in the remaining verses of this section, we see that temptation can go a second way. Thus, temptation, (1) when endured goes to approvedness and hope; and (2) when surrendered to it goes to sin and death. The difference is in the will of man. This section of Scripture is arguing the *individual responsibility* of man for sin. Man must not blame God. Nor can he lay the full blame on the tempter, for his temptation is only possible through the lust that is within him. The deadly character of sin, emphasized by both Paul and James, is all the

more reason why man must know and face his responsibility in sin. Sin is not something of such little consequence that it can be ignored. Sin not only makes all the difference in the world, but all the difference out of the world! To deliberately close our eyes to our responsibility for our guilt, is to ignore the fact that Jesus died for us. Notice how both Paul and James emphasize this responsibility, by comparing James 1:13-15 with Romans 7:8,10,13; Heb. 11:17; I Cor. 10:9.

Since God tried Abraham in the offering up of his son (Heb. 11:17) some might argue that this contradicts the case that God tempts no man. Also, the fact that the Israelites made trial of the Lord (I Cor. 10:9) seems to contradict the case that God cannot be tempted. These "contradictions" are not real, however. The Israelites did not tempt God to do evil, but rather to bring a just punishment upon them. Although Abraham was tried by God (i.e., his meeting the situation was a testing and proving of his faith), yet, if he had any temptation to do evil and not obey God, this did not come from God. This part, if any, came from within Abraham's own doubt. Thus, if Abraham walked in full assurance of faith, his faith was tried, but he was not tempted to sin. Any temptation to sin would spring from his own weaknesses, and not from any weaknesses in God's character. Every choice laid before us is a testing of our faith. Every temptation to take the wrong course in such a choice comes from our own desires.

Temptation (*peirasmos*) is apparently a very inclusive term in this case. Paul speaks of "that which was a temptation to you in my flesh," Gal. 4:14, with seemingly a morally neutral value, with a good significance, especially since the Galatians did not despise nor reject Paul because of feelings of natural repugnance that may have been aroused. Then again, Jesus asked us to pray not to be led into temptation; i.e., trials beyond our willful control, Matt. 6:13. Our own carelessness and disobedience can also be a source of temptation when we give in to the weakness of the flesh. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. 26:41. This temptation covers also the definite devil-produced trials designed to lead us into sin. "But they that are rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition," I Tim. 6:9. (c.f. Luke 4:13, 8:13). The word can even be descriptive of our temptation to try or challenge God. "Harden

not your hearts, as in the provocation, like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried me by proving me, and saw my works forty years," Heb. 3:8-9.

The universality of the possibility of temptation should humble every man of us. "*Each* man is tempted when . . .", there are conditions under which any man has the possibility of temptation. This is true of a Christian, a "long-time" Christian, and a Christian who walks very close to God, even one "after God's own heart." Those who teach that a "second work of grace" so conditions us that we are beyond the possibility of temptation need to take a second look . . . a look at both the Scriptures and at their own lives! "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us," I John 1:8. Even Jesus was tempted "in all points as we are," Heb. 4:15. Paul said he had to "buffet his body" to bring it into subjection, I Cor. 9:27. Under no circumstances must we lower our guard against the possibility of temptation. With the help of God, we shall be overcomers: not because we have not sinned, but because we have no sin!

The grace of God through the blood of Christ so covers my sin that I can appear in God's presence without sin, wearing the cloak of Jesus' righteousness. That which I have overcome (sin) by Jesus' blood, the new creature that I am must not love and seek for; but rather I must flee from it, heeding the warning concerning my own lustful desires, praying for strength and God's leading, buffeting my body when necessary.

If I refuse to accept the warnings, it is not only possible, but likely, that I will be dragged off by my own lust, taken in tow by my own desires. Then, I will have no one to blame but myself. Satan, who tempts me, has no power over me that I have not given him, for I am "able to endure it" (I Cor. 10:13) if I will to so resist.

There are certain things, or certain amounts, that I should not eat. This is true, not because God has so stated, but because I know it will harm the "temple" of my body, thus hindering my useful service for God. Yet, when I have "overdone" it, or have eaten that which would hinder my service for God; whom shall I blame? I do not like to eat boiled cow's feet. Even though the cook has prepared a large pot of boiled cow's feet, cooked and flavored to perfection, I would not be tempted to eat from the dish! However, if the dish were banana cream pie, topped with a huge scoop of ice cream covered over with whipped cream, I would have a desire to eat. . . . even if the dish followed a huge meal from which I had already

overeaten! The devil has no power to tempt me, except there is the desire within me to partake. The desire to do wrong is my own. I cannot blame God for it, nor can I blame Adam for it. The natural forces about me may furnish the circumstances, the devil may cook the meal, God has created man, I received my body from my parents; but, the willful choice is of my own doing! I "know my transgression, and my sin is ever before me," Psalm 51:3. I fall and sin, not because of external conditions, but because I choose to yield to that which is within. "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 7:24-25a)

The figure of birth in verses 14-15 is very descriptive of the processes of sin. Two factors unite and give birth to a third. This whole process, if not stopped, results in the death-child. Notice the three unions: (1) grandfather lust within and grandmother evil without give birth to enticement, (v. 14); (2) father lust within and mother enticement give birth to sin, (v. 15a); sin matures and being married to the law of God ("The wages of sin is death", Rom. 6:23) gives birth to death, v. 15b. Repentance and confession may avoid and break the process of sin (I John 1:7-9; Acts 8:22), but if this sin process is not stopped, the child will be born!

Whether or not verse 16 is to go with that which went before, or with that which follows, might evoke some discussion. There is no reason, however, why this verse cannot be a bridge connecting both sides. "Do not be deceived about the source of temptation" on the one side, and "Do not be deceived about the source of every good gift" on the other. The expression thus serves to emphasize and repeat the warning that to be blind to the source of temptation would be to carelessly cultivate the process of death within us. How very important it is to know of a certainty that I am a sinner, personally and emphatically responsible before God, and as such, I am in desperate need of the gift of salvation. Thus, my heart is prepared for the verses to follow regarding the source of all good things.

Sermon Outlines

IS TEMPTATION A JOY?

1:2-4

Proposition: When should a Christian not have joy in temptation, and how could a Christian find joy in temptation?

- I. Temptation is no joy.
 - A. The Christian hates sin, and does not want to sin.
 - B. The Christian is instructed by God to flee temptation.
 - C. God promises the Christian he shall not be tempted beyond that which he is able to bear.

- II. Christians are tempted.
 - A. They live in the flesh, and the flesh still has appetites.
 - B. The Christian still has his free will. His choice of God means there is the possibility of another choice.
 - C. The devil does not give up. He is rather more zealous in his efforts to lead a Christian to sin.
 - D. Most of the New Testament is written to Christians to encourage them to faithfulness, thus making it evident that a Christian *can* wander away from God.

- III. We can count temptation *as if* it were joy.
 - A. Not because of the desire to sin. There is no joy in even the appearance of evil.
 - B. Not because of the possibility of doing sin. This horrifies us. We long for the day when we will be beyond temptation.
 - C. Because of the result in us if we are faithful in the temptation:
 - 1. We grow in strength to resist.
 - 2. We grow in understanding others who are tempted.
 - 3. We prove our faith in Christ.
 - 4. Temptation resisted completes our Christ life, and the result is that we have no spiritual shortcoming.

THE ROAD TO TRUE WISDOM 1:5-7

Proposition: What is the source of true wisdom, and how do we get it?

Introduction: True Wisdom Defined: More than knowledge . . . the ability to know what to do with knowledge.

- I. The source of True Wisdom: God.
 - A. He is all-powerful; He knows everything; He is everywhere.

- B. He wants to help; He "giveth."
- C. His nature is to give liberally, abundantly.
- D. He upbraideth not when He gives.
 1. He does not hold it against the one who receives.
 2. He is not continually "rubbing it in," nor gloating over us.
 3. He has no subtle and hidden selfish reasons for giving.

II. The means of obtaining True Wisdom: Seeking.

- A. Seek Wisdom at its source: God.
- B. Hear God's wisdom that is given: His Word.
- C. Seek in faith, knowing God has the wisdom and His Word is true.
- D. Use the wisdom when received, else it will be useless.

III. Warning against Double-mindedness.

- A. To waver in your confidence in God's ability, is to waver between two masters.
- B. The undecided goes nowhere, like a wave of the sea.
- C. To have a double mind is to be unstable in everything else.

THE SUFFERING STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN 1:2-12

Proposition: To show how and why a Christian faces temptation.

Introduction: Troubles and affliction may be the lot of the "best" Christians. Closeness to the Lord does not immune from suffering, but rather we may expect that it may be our lot to "suffer with Him."

I. Outward afflictions and sufferings may be a temptation to the Christian.

- A. By the devil's drawing men to commit sin.
- B. By the desire to refrain from doing the duties and services to God.

II. Temptations are numerous and varied.

- A. "Divers" temptations, includes all kinds and varieties.
- B. They are hard to detect, for they come from "within."

- C. Our love for friends and relatives is a subtle and insidious source.

III. Duties of Christians under trial:

- A. Resistance to be exercised in "joy" . . . count it as if it were all joy. (Because God allows it for our future benefit.)
- B. Faith is to be exercised.
v. 3 "The trial of your faith."
v. 6 "Let him ask in faith."
- C. There must be a steadfastness.
"Faith worketh patience."
"Tribulation worketh patience," Rom. 5:3
- D. Prayer requests for needs during trial are in order.
1. Especially for wisdom.
2. We are encouraged to pray (v. 5)
3. We have the definite promise of God concerning wisdom requests. (v. 5)

IV. Temptations Resisted bring Rewards.

- A. Our Christian spirit is tried and made firm.
- B. Our spirit of resistance is made stronger.
- C. Our dependance upon God is strengthened.
- D. By resistance we prove our love for God, and become recipients of the promised crown.
- E. Resisting temptation serves the interest of God's kingdom and edifies His body.

FOURTEEN SERMON TITLES WITH THREE-POINT OUTLINES

THE JOY OF KNOWING v. 2,3

- A. Christians are tempted.
- B. Temptations are directed toward the Christian's faith.
- C. Patience is the intended result.

THE PERFECT WORK OF PATIENCE v. 4

That you may be: A. Perfect, B. Entire, C. Lacking in nothing.

SEEKING WISDOM v. 5

- A. We need it
- B. The only source is of God.
- C. We must seek it to get it.

WISDOM IS FROM GOD v. 5

- A. He gives liberally.
- B. He does not hold it against those who receive from Him.
- C. He promises results.

HOW TO ASK OF GOD v. 6

- A. Ask for that which we have a right to receive.
- B. Ask in faith.
- C. Waver not, neither in confidence nor in life.

FAITHLESS FAITH v. 6-8

- A. A doubting man is like the wave of the sea. v. 6
- B. A doubting man gets nowhere and receives no results. v. 7
- C. A doubting man is also unstable in other ways. v. 8

WAVERING WAVES v. 6

- A. They have no will of their own, and are at the mercies of others.
- B. They are driven by the pressure of winds outside themselves.
- C. They are tossed to and fro.

WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT v. 9

- A. You will see your need of Christ and seek help of God.
- B. In Christ you have many brothers.
- C. You have great cause of rejoicing through spiritual exaltation.

RAGS OF RICHES v. 10-11

- A. The rich can go only in one direction: down.
- B. The illusionary beauty of riches is temporary.
- C. The attainments of the rich shall pass away.

WILTING WONDERS OF THIS WORLD v. 11

- A. Circumstances of this life scorch and burn them.

1:1-15

JAMES

- B. Their results fail and fall.
- C. Their beauty is temporary.

WHY ENDURE v. 12

- A. We are blessed when we do.
- B. We have the approval of God when we do.
- C. We shall receive the crown of life if we do.

DON'T BLAME GOD v. 13

- A. God, who has no lust, cannot be tempted with evil.
- B. God tempts no man to do evil.
- C. To blame God is to attempt to avoid the responsibility for our temptation.

TEMPTATION'S SOURCE v. 14

- A. Temptation comes when we are drawn away from God.
- B. Temptation comes from the lust within man himself.
- C. Temptation is an enticement that snares and entraps.

THREE GENERATIONS v. 14,15

- A. Lust plus enticement begets temptation.
- B. Temptation plus "giving in" begets sin.
- C. Sin plus its continuance begets death.