

# Good Gifts and Tempting Traps

James 1:9-18

7/19/2025

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Announcements:

Youth group prayer for camp  
Women's Bible study - 10-week study in John starting August 17th -  
signup online

## Scripture

James 1:9-18 (NKJV) [9] Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, [10] but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. [11] For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. [12] Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. [13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. [14] But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. [15] Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. [16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. [18] Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Intro:

James is teaching us what it means to discover and embrace authentic faith; faith that goes beyond profession to practice and moves beyond appearance into substance. The practical counsel of James has sometimes been referred to as the Proverbs of the New Testament. In reality, it pulls back the curtain of our "Christian-ease" to show us what's under the surface.

Last week, we discovered that the only kind of faith that grows is a faith that is tested. The joy of going through trials is the knowledge of what God is producing in us through the trial. As we bear up under the weight of challenges and difficulties, our faith muscle, which relies on God, becomes stronger and helps us become complete, spiritually mature followers of Jesus. But faith also grows through embracing and practicing God's wisdom. We must believe that he has wisdom to give us in our time of need and believe enough to put His wisdom into practice, even when it fights against our own natural desires or understanding: Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV) [5] Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; [6] In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Next, James moves to the category where most of us experience the most trials, need the most patience, and require the most wisdom: our worldly wealth and material possessions.

He does this by offering contrasts between that which the world gives, which fades away, and that which God gives, the Father of Lights, which lasts forever.

So let's look at these contrasts in 4 points this morning:

Humiliation of worldly Wealth Celebration of the Eternal Crown  
Fortification Against Worldly Lusters  
Expectation from the Eternal Giver

## Main Point

### Point 1

Humiliation of Worldly Wealth (James 1:9–11)

## Scripture

James 1:9-11 (NKJV) [9] Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, [10] but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. [11] For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

The way of the world naturally suggests that those who have more can boast more in what they have, and those who have little can worry more about what they don't have. For many, wealth, worldly comfort, material possessions, and financial security are the ultimate goals of life. For those who find themselves with less, they can often sense that they didn't measure up in life, that they failed. But James wants both to take an eternal mindset:

## Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

“In Christ, the poor man can look past his earthly poverty, and the rich man can look past his earthly wealth so that both can rejoice equally in Christ.”

### 1. To the Poor - glory in their exultation

Exultation? The question might be asked, “What exultation?” My house isn’t anything to look at, I have nothing anyone would covet, and hopefully, my rent gets paid this month! A lot is going on here, but exaltation doesn’t seem to be one of them!

But not so in the eyes of God. The exultation of the godly poor is that Christ has highly valued them and lifted them high in the placement of His kingdom. Later in chapter 2, James will bring up the subject again:

### Scripture

James 2:5 (NKJV) [5] Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

That is: Those who have little more on earth than Jesus find it easier to embrace the riches of heaven by faith. They have fewer idols and worldly ties that keep many people from trusting or following Christ.

### Scripture

Luke 6:20-21 (NKJV) [20] Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. [21] Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled...

James and Jesus aren’t claiming that poverty is a means to salvation, only that the riches of the world can easily cloud our faith.

### Scripture

Matthew 19:24 (NKJV) [24] And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

### Quote

— John Stott

“In God’s economy, poverty is often the pre-requisite for spiritual riches.”

What this doesn't mean:

This isn't a suggestion to seek poverty for greater spirituality, or to accept laziness and foolishness as acceptable because they made you poor! Work hard as unto the Lord. Steward what you have well. Give to the Lord and prioritize generosity in your life. Seek wisdom with your finances. And then be content with what God provides, be it much or little. If it's a little, then rejoice and boast that God has given you a greater capacity for faith. There's a good chance you may do more of eternal value, storing up treasures in heaven, than those who are utterly consumed with storing up for themselves treasures on earth.

## 2. To the Rich - boast in your humiliation

It seems backward, but it aligns with the entire chapter: faith is counter to the world. Great wealth here and now may give the presentation of exultation, but the reality is that it will all fade, and many who had much in this world will stand before their creator with nothing eternally valuable to show from their life.

To glory in your humiliation means that you view your wealth as a gift, not the goal of life. Something to hold with open hands, not clenched fists. Something that belongs to God and was entrusted to you, not something that belongs to you because of your extraordinary abilities or achievements.

### Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

"God measures wealth not by what you're able to store up for yourself, but by what you're willing to lay down for Christ and others."

### Scripture

Proverbs 11:28 (NKJV) [28] He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage.

### Illustration

Foliage is something that grows through every season, but the wildflowers that bloom [image] in the deserts of Israel after a rainy season only last a month or so. The flower appears to have greater beauty, but the foliage has a lasting life.

### Scripture

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NKJV) [17] Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. [18] Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, [19] storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

## Application

The Bible never teaches that wealth is inherently evil—it teaches that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Throughout Scripture, God uses resources for His glory when they are surrendered to Him. Abraham was wealthy in livestock and silver and used his household to bless others (Gen. 13:2; 14:14–24). Joseph managed Egypt's wealth to preserve nations during famine (Gen. 41). The Israelites brought offerings of gold, silver, and precious materials to construct the Tabernacle (Ex. 35:21–29), and later, Solomon spared no expense in building the Temple, a dwelling for the glory of God (1 Kings 6). In the New Testament, wealthy women like Joanna and Susanna supported Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:3), and Joseph of Arimathea—"a rich man and disciple"—offered his personal tomb for Jesus' burial, fulfilling prophecy (Matt. 27:57–60; Isa. 53:9). Even Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, used her home and resources to support the early church (Acts 16:14–15). Wealth is a tool—it either builds altars or idols. What matters isn't how much you have, but whether your treasure has you or you use it to treasure Christ.

The point here is the perspective that leads to the correct handling of the wealth we've been entrusted. Without a doubt, James was considering the words of Jeremiah in this writing:

## Scripture

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NKJV) [23] Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; [24] But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.

## Main Point

### Point 2

Fortification Against Worldly Lusts (James 1:13–15)

## Scripture

James 1:12 (NKJV) [12] Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Now we enter into the realm of the naturally known struggle for every human being: the allurements of sin (temptation) versus the gifts of God. We may not see it on the surface, but many people, with a temporal perspective, see sinful pleasures as a gift and God's refinement as a curse.

Yet, the first, while offering immediate and temporary pleasure, yields long-lasting pain, while the second offers temporary difficulty for long-lasting pleasure.

Let's also define temptation in this passage:

## Application

Tempted - not the external allurements but the internal desire.

In other words, James is not just talking about the lure, but about the desire that wants to chase the lure. There is no sin in the fact that temptation is present; the sin is exposed by how our hearts, minds, and passions respond to the sin that's presented to us.

### A. The battle of temptation: Endure

James doesn't suggest that temptations should be easy to overcome, or that they aren't persistent. Endurance means to bear, to face with courage and calmness. Temptation will be a battleground because there is still a flesh inside you that desires sin, but endurance clings to Christ's strength and promises and engages the battle rather than falling under the pressure.

## Scripture

[1 Corinthians 10:13] (NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

When we are approved - it's a process that doesn't happen overnight.

### B. The Motive against temptation

Promised to those who love Him - In other words, those who fight against temptation and sin do so because they love Jesus. Notice we don't fight temptation to impress God, or to earn something from God, or because we are afraid of God. We fight temptation because it's an act of love for Jesus. It recognizes that He died to free me from the very thing that's tempting me and seeks my destruction. So if you sin, do you not love God? Well, I'd rather frame it like this: Our love for God is in the process of becoming perfected. It's true, when we sin, we are making the statement that we love our sin more than we love God. This doesn't mean our love for God isn't sincere, but that it's not mature. There is some growing to do. Instead of measuring our love for God by how we feel, we need to measure it by what we do, be honest where we lack, and confess and repent in order for our love to grow.

### C. The Reward for Overcoming Temptation

Crown of life - this could reference the reward of eternal life that we will receive at the end of our faith. It also could be allegorical that when we overcome temptation, our life here and now becomes beautified by holiness. This crown is the victor's crown. It signifies the fact that someone has overcome to finish well. To the church in Smyrna, Jesus writes:

#### Scripture

[Revelation 2:10] (NKJV) [10] Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

One thing we do know: Overcoming temptation and resisting sin comes with a greater reward than what the sin itself offers.

#### Quote

— AW Tozer

"Temptations are ladders either up to character or down to chaos."

The next step in choosing correctly is understanding the source of sinful temptations (verse 13). And what is the source?

#### Scripture

James 1:13-16 (NKJV) [13] Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. [14] But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. [15] Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. [16] Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

1. It is NOT God - God does not place the desire to sin within a person's heart.

It may seem obvious, but many people give an excuse for their sin, claiming the desire must be from God.

## Illustration

God wants me to be happy and knows that we love each other, which is why I cheated on my spouse and left them to marry my true love. I am a gay Christian because God created me with the desire to love people of the same gender, and I can't deny my God-given identity. I know I never give a tithe, support a missionary or generously give to others because I don't have the money, but God really wants me to have that new boat, I mean it was on sale! Divine timing!

Let's face it, God frequently becomes our scapegoat or justification to continue in sinful desires. James makes it clear: The nature of God is holy! God and sin can no more be mixed together than oil and water. God knows nothing of evil desire, nor does he plant evil desire in the human heart.

## Quote

— Pastor Josh

"God will never tempt us, but He will allow us to be tempted to test what's inside of us."

2. It IS me - the desire for sin and its consequences begins and ends with me.

T e m p t a t i o n c o n c e i v e d : i n t e r n a l d e s i r e ! ' T e m p t a t i o n b e l i e v e d : t h e r e c e i v e d : T h e c o n s e q u e n c e o f d e a t h .

We often run from personal accountability when it comes to our sinful desires and decisions.

## Illustration

The devil made me do it - he may have arranged or orchestrated the external allurements, but you didn't need his help to want it or decide to do it, your sinful nature is more than capable of that on its own. You have the demon in you - Some unbelievers are demonically possessed, and some believers are demonically oppressed through spiritual warfare. But you don't need the demon of lust, greed, pride, deception... your flesh has an abundant supply of all of them! You don't need to deliver the demon; you need to crucify the flesh! It's that other person's fault! - Someone else's possessions are not the reason for your covetousness. Someone else's clothing choice is not the reason for your lust. Someone else's choices are not the source of your lying or uncontrollable anger. Yes, people and their actions can sometimes seek to trigger a fleshly response, but the sin comes from within us.



Do not be deceived!

## Scripture

Galatians 6:7-8 (NKJV) [7] Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. [8] For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

## Main Point

### Point 3

Expectation from the Eternal Giver (James 1:16–18)

## Scripture

James 1:17-18 (NKJV) [17] Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. [18] Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

James closes with this statement because of the nature of what he just discussed. Some might see ease as the good gift, not trials. Some might only see wealth as the good gift, not neediness. Some might see self-indulgence as the good gift, not self-denial. But God always gives us what is good and perfect, even if we don't see it or feel it in the moment.

Like the lights in the heavens, the sun, the moon, which reflects its light, and the stars that shine brightly and consistently, God's goodness never changes, shifts, or fluctuates.

Charles Spurgeon wisely wrote:

## Quote

— Charles Spurgeon

The worldling blesses God while he gives him plenty, but the Christian blesses him in all circumstances: he believes Him to be too wise to err and too good to be unkind; he trusts Him where he cannot trace him, looks up to him in the darkest hour, and believes that all is well.

Conclusion

Jesus experienced both poverty (Phil. 2:6–8) and temptation (Matt. 4)—yet never sinned. He wore a crown of thorns so we could receive the crown of life (v. 12). Through Him, the poor are exalted, and the rich are humbled—and we are made “firstfruits” (v. 18) of His new creation.