

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Who is to Blame?**

**James 1:13-18**

#### **Part Three**

We have been considering various tests of living faith. The very first test that we have considered in this epistle is the “RESPONSE TO TRIALS TEST” in **VV. 2-12**. And what is the proper response to trials? The answer is perseverance. Not the “let’s just get through this” kind of perseverance but rather a loving God kind of perseverance, we saw this in **V. 12**. And how specifically can this love for God be manifested in the midst of our difficulties? By “**counting it all joy when we encounter various trials.**” Hopefully none of us will be satisfied until this is the experience of our lives, until we have reached this standard of excellence which is so clearly put before us in **verse 2**.

But James is not satisfied with just giving us the proper response to trials in our lives. He also wants to give us the improper response to trials. And we find this in **VV. 13-18**, “**Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God**”; **for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. (14) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (15) then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. (17) Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (18) In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.**” Every difficult thing that comes into our lives will either strengthen us or tempt us. Every difficult thing that comes into our lives will either be used to build us up or to tear us down.

But who is to blame if we respond improperly to the trial?” James wants to make sure in **VV. 13-18** that we understand exactly where the blame needs to be placed and that blame certainly does not rest with God. In attempting to convince us of this very important truth he gives to us five different proofs.

The first proof is the NATURE OF EVIL. Look at **V. 13** “**Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He himself does not tempt anyone.**” What do we learn about evil in this verse? “**Evil cannot tempt God.**” Just as darkness cannot effect light evil cannot effect God. The Bible teaches us that God is perfectly separated from sin. Therefore evil cannot tempt God and neither will God tempt others to evil.

The second proof is the NATURE OF MAN. Look at **V. 14** “**But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.**” The world is full of traps and snares that have been baited by Satan. The nature of man is such that our natural healthy desires when baited can be stirred up to lust after that which is forbidden.

The third proof is the NATURE OF LUST. Look at **VV. 15-16**, “**Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**” Most people think of sin as a solitary act. But it truly is a process which James illustrates by using the picture of childbirth. And nowhere in this process is God involved.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

This morning we will continue on in our examination of **James 1:13-18** and will consider the fourth proof that James offers to show us that God cannot be directly or indirectly to blame for our improper response to trials.

### THE NATURE OF GOD

Let us look at **V.17**, **“Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”** In this verse James is giving us insight into God’s nature and showing us that it would be impossible for us in light of His nature to think that God is in any way involved in our sinful responses to difficult situations.

Let us look just at the very first phrase, **“Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above.”** Another more literal rendering of this phrase would be, **“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights.”** In other words every gift that we could consider beneficial and complete is from God and there is no other source for such gifts.

If God is the only supplier of such gifts should we be concerned that He might be reluctant to bestow them upon us. What we discover is quite the opposite is true. God is eager to give us these good and perfect gifts. In fact, God is compelled to give in this way because He is good. Goodness is an attribute of God. When the biblical writers call God good’, they are thinking in general of all those moral qualities which prompt His people to call him ‘perfect.’(Exodus 33:17-19; 34:5-7).

In **Exodus 33:17-19** it says, **“And the Lord said to Moses, “I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have known you by name.” (18) Then Moses said, “I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!” (19) And He said, “I myself will make all My goodness pass before you.”** Then in **Ex. 34:5-7** it says, **“And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. (6) Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.” (7) Who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.”** Certainly God’s goodness as it is defined here in this passage compels him to give gifts that are beneficial and complete. How is God’s goodness described in this passage? It is described as compassionate, gracious, and abounding in lovingkindness.

If we come to the Lord and ask for a loaf of bread we should not expect him to give us a stone. If we ask for a fish we should not expect Him to give us a snake. Why? Because God is in His essence is good. This is not something that I have made up this is what Jesus said.

Let us look at a very familiar passage of Scripture on prayer in **Matt. 7:7-11**, **“Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. (8) For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks find, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. (9) Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? (10) Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?”**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

**(11) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him.” God is not going to hold back these good and perfect gifts from those who desire to follow Him and please Him (Mt. 7:7-11; Ps. 1:1-3)**

I am sure you are familiar with **Ps. 1:1-3** but I would like to remind you of this very wonderful and graphic picture, **“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. (3) And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”** Do we believe this? Do we believe that God is good and desires to pour out blessing upon those who choose to follow Him? Do we believe that God is incapable of holding back good things from our lives? Do we believe this?

Let us visualize the supply of good and perfect gifts that God desires to pour out on us. What do you see? I view the supply something like the Pacific Ocean. I see myself sitting on the beach looking out over the water and knowing that if I began to remove the water as fast as I could by whatever means might be available to me I could never exhaust the supply. Hopefully this is similar to the way that you view the supply of the good and perfect gifts that God desires to pour out upon your life and you to be pleasing to Him.

Questioning God’s goodness will open the door to Satan’s lies and ultimately to sin (Gen. 2:16,17; 3:1-5). Isn’t that what happened with Eve in the garden? Remember the story. God had said to Adam and Eve that they could eat “from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” This command was not given in order to harm them or to deny them. His commands always flow out of his goodness and are meant to serve us and we must believe this.

But you I surely remember what happened. It says in **Gen. 3:1**, **“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden.” (2) And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; (3) but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.”** You can see very quickly that Eve is not in the best position to resist what is about to come her way.

The reason why I say this is because she has twisted what God had said. He did not say that she would die if she touched it. He said that in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” **(4) Satan responds back, “You shall not surely die!** (Of course that is a lie but he goes on to bait the trap even more). **“(5) For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** What is Satan doing to Eve? He is challenging her confidence in God’s Goodness. Rather than presenting God as compassionate, gracious, abounding in loving kindness. Satan is presenting God as uncaring, and self-centered.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Last week we talked about sin and saw it as a process. And I shared with you that we need to fight sin at its root and that is at the point of desire. The only way we can do this is with our faith. We must believe what God has said. We must believe in the justice of God and know that “Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap.” We need to know that if we sow to our flesh and give ourselves over to sin that we will reap death and destruction. But we also must appreciate the goodness of God also. We must appreciate the fact that God will not hold back any good thing from the one who chooses to do right. In fact, He will not only not hold back but He will open up the storehouse of His goodness and pour it out upon us.

Let us consider David for a moment. You know this story very well. David the king of Israel had decided not to go out to battle with his armies but stayed back in Jerusalem. And on one particular night when he could not sleep he got up and walked out onto his roof and there below him was a very beautiful woman bathing. The next day he chose to pursue more information about the woman. And what did he find out? He found out that her name was Bathsheba and that she was the wife of Uriah. Now if he did not know that he was in trouble before he heard this information he should have known it now. He needed to fight the battle with sin at the point of desire. And how should he have fought that battle? By Faith!

He could have said to himself if I go forward and give permission to myself to pursue something I know is wrong, I will surely be going down the path of death and destruction. But if I would drop this matter and pursue that which is pleasing to the Lord He will pour out upon me all that is good. I will receive good gifts and perfect gifts in abundance. If he had accepted these thoughts and embraced them as true he would have found his natural healthy God given desires remaining in check rather than pouring forth in lustful passion but He didn't. His desire turned into lust and when His lust conceived it gave birth to sin. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and got her pregnant had Uriah killed in order to cover his sin and to have Bathsheba as his wife. And when this sin was accomplished it brought forth exactly what God said it would.

Let us look at the result of his decision in **2 Sam. 12**. **“Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said, ‘There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. (2) The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. (3) But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom. And was like a daughter to him. (4) Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.’ (5) Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.’ (6) Nathan then said to David, ‘You are the man! ..... (10) Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ (11) Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. (12) Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’”**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Then in **V. 14** the Lord also shared with David the following, **“because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die,”** All of these terrible things that resulted from his sin should have surprised him. These are the kind of things that happen when we choose to sin. The Scriptures have made it very clear. But when we choose sin we need also to recognize that not only are we putting ourselves in a position to experience terrible things but we are also removing ourselves from the position to experience blessed things. We are also removing ourselves from the position of receiving those good and perfect gifts.

Consider again the words of Nathan the prophet to David in **VV. 7-8**, **“You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. (8) I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these.’”** God had poured out blessings on David throughout his life and would have continued to pour blessings upon his life if he had only continued in obedience. But David forgot God’s goodness and took the bait.

**HOPEFULLY YOU WOULD PROFIT FROM THIS STORY AND TAKE IT TO HEART.** But you may read this OT story and say but perhaps God has changed in the way that He deals with us. Perhaps He will forget to pour out death and destruction on those who sin or perhaps He may forget to pour out blessing on those who choose to do what is right.

This is impossible. Look at the rest of the verse. **“Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”** Notice that God is called the **“Father of lights.”**

This expression was used to speak of God as Creator. The lights that are referred to here are the sun, moon, and stars. The lights He has created are subject to variation or in other words they give to us at times more light than at other times. And also the lights He has created are subject to shifting shadow. Or in other words, they give us in their interplay with us and this world the appearance of change. This is not so with God. The point is that God’s goodness which expresses itself in the giving of good and perfect gifts never changes.

### CONCLUSION

There is a proper way to respond to trials and there is an improper way to respond to trials. When we respond improperly to trials and allow that trial to be a stepping stone to spiritual defeat rather than spiritual victory let us not in any way, shape or form accuse or implicate God as being somehow responsible. James in an attempt to prove to us that this would be impossible offers up five different proofs.

The first proof is the **NATURE OF EVIL**. **“Evil cannot tempt God.”** Look at **V. 13** **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.’”**

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Just as darkness cannot effect light evil cannot effect God. The Bible teaches us that God is perfectly separated from sin. Therefore evil cannot tempt God and neither will God tempt others to evil.

The second proof is the NATURE OF MAN. Look at **V. 14** “**But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.**” The world is full of traps and snares that have been baited by Satan. The nature of man is such that our natural healthy desires can turn into lust when we view the perceived satisfaction of those desires as being more important than obedience. Within our humanness this potential for waywardness is a constant threat.

The third proof is the NATURE OF LUST. Let us read **VV. 15-16**, “**Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**” Most people think of sin as a solitary act. But it truly is a result of a process which James illustrates by using the picture of childbirth. And nowhere in this process is God involved.

The fourth proof is the NATURE OF GOD. Let us read **V. 17**, “**Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.**” God could never tempt us to evil because He only gives good and perfect gifts.

In order to effectively control natural human desires so that they do not turn into full blown lust is to be convinced of this, “**THAT TO DISOBEY GOD BRINGS EXTRAORDINARILY BAD THINGS AND TO OBEY GOD BRINGS EXTRAORDINARILY GOOD THINGS.**”