

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

James Week 2 - Temptation

July 19, 2020



We all face trials in our lives. I'm sure that's no surprise to anyone! James begins his letter by telling us that trials are given to us in order for perseverance to grow in us, so that we can become mature in our walk with the Lord. They help shape us into who we were created to be. Temptations, on the other hand, are a shortcut. They are the work of the devil and are there to keep us from maturing in our faith. Temptations are the easy way out, the instant gratification as opposed to building endurance, and James tell us that they only lead to death.

When God created Adam and Eve He gave them a purpose. Genesis tells us that they were to rule over all of creation. In other words, they were to care for God's beautiful world. They were to partner with God and to learn from Him so that they could continue the good work that God had begun in His creation. And in the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God told them not to eat from. This was a trial that was before them - don't eat of that fruit, but trust that God is giving you all that you need. The serpent then twists it around and turns it into a temptation - *eat of it and you will be like God*. Rather than taking time and learning endurance from trusting God, take this shortcut and learn right and wrong now. In eating of the fruit, Adam and Eve failed the test, and failed to be the people that God had originally intended for them to be. God told them that if they ate of the tree they would surely die. James here reminds us that sin ultimately leads to death.

The devil tried this trick again, many years later. After Jesus was baptized he was led into the desert for 40 days and he was met with another shortcut from the devil. *Bow to me, the devil said. Avoid the pain and suffering of the cross, and I'll give you the nations now. There's no need for the endurance ahead of you.*

Thanks be to God that Jesus did not take the shortcut! It was only through his death on the cross that Jesus took on the weight of our sins, and only by His death was He able to rise to new life forever defeating the power of death and offering eternal life to us. No shortcut could have accomplished this, it was only possible by persevering and remaining faithful to the will of God the Father.

How often do we settle for a shortcut? We get worn down by the weariness of the world and it's all too easy for us to settle for shortcuts, instant gratification, and self-pleasure instead of holding steady during trials. When we give in to temptation, our growth in maturity is stunted. It is only by remaining faithful and persevering during trials that we grow into maturity and into the people that God created us to be. As James writes, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12)

SO, CONSIDER:

1. Are there places in your life where you find yourself taking a shortcut rather than enduring a trial?
2. Are there certain circumstances where you find it easier to give into temptations? Are there practices you can put in place to give yourself support during trials?
3. Have you seen fruit in your life from enduring trials? What was produced in your life? How did you persevere in the trial?

TAKE ACTION:

This week when you feel tempted to take a shortcut rather than endure the trial that is before you, remind yourself that true maturity comes through endurance. Trust that God is good, and that His grace is enough to take you through whatever it is you are going through.

~ Pastor Justin