



Wednesday, February 17 – 11:00 & 7:00

Ash Wednesday – 2021

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: *By God's grace* we are *continuing to repent and believe*, so we have God's great gifts of ***forgiveness, peace, and eternal life!*** However, **▶**we still live in this fallen world and **▶**we still have an old nature within us; therefore, *we are still being tempted to sin.*

Why is that a problem? Temptation *can* lead to sin, and sin *can* **▶**make a mess of our earthly lives **and** **▶**even cause us to abandon God's great gifts; therefore, *temptation, which begins that process, is a serious matter!*

A point of clarification: In the Bible, the words *trial* and *temptation* come from the SAME Greek word (πειρασμός), *but the purpose of each word is quite different:*

- ✓ **Trials:** God permits them for our good – *to toughen us up as Christians* (no pain, no gain).
- ✓ **Temptations:** They come from the devil, the world, and our sinful nature – *to lead us into sin and death.*

So how does temptation work? *That is our focus today!*

1. **Enduring When Tempted:** James 1:12, *today's first verse*, makes a transition from the topic of trials – *mentioned earlier in James* – to the topic of temptations – *mentioned in the verses that follow*.  
NAU **James 1:12** Blessed is a man who perseveres [*continues firm*] under trial [*πειρασμόν*]; for once he has been approved [*stood the trial*], he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him. // Three more thoughts on **trials**:
  - a. When we do not understand them, let us remember that **♣**God is in control (Is. 55:9) and **♣**causing all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).
  - b. Let us rely on God's word and God's strength, *and never on ourselves*.
  - c. Whenever we are experiencing a trial, *let us keep our focus on the promised "crown of life..."*
  
2. **God Does Not Tempt Us:** <sup>13</sup> 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. // God is God; we are people.
  - a. God cannot be tempted: The Bible says: "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent..." (Num. 23:19 NAS). The Bible also says that "the LORD our God is holy!" (Ps. 99:9 ESV). So, God **♣**cannot be tempted to sin and **♣**does not sin!
  - b. God does not tempt: **Tug-of-war**: *God is always trying to pull us to Him*, while the forces of evil are always trying to pull us into sin. For God to

tempt us would be counterproductive. **Lord's Prayer – Sixth Petition:** “And lead us not into temptation.” We ARE NOT praying, *God, stop tempting me!* Instead, we ARE praying, *God, lead me so that I am not tempted!*

3. **Our Old Nature Tempts Us:** <sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is carried away [more literally, dragged away] and enticed [trapped] by his own lust [desire, longing]. // **Think about fishing:** You use some form of bait – *that is liked by the fish* – to entice or tempt the fish to bite; then, when he does, *YOU GOT'EM!* **The evil work of** ✦ **the devil**, ✦ **the sinful world**, and ✦ **our sinful nature:** They dangle something in front of us – *that we might like* – to entice us or tempt us to ✦ violate God's word AND ✦ feel justified in doing so; for example:

- a. **Looking with lust** – *I should do it because she is beautiful!*
- b. **Skipping church** – *It is okay because I have more important things to do!*
- c. **Remaining angry** – *God will understand because what that person did was horrible!*
- d. **Not tithing** – *I have the right to give whatever I choose because what I have belongs to me!*
- e. **Withholding forgiveness** – *I am justified in doing so because she has not asked for my forgiveness AND I do not think she is even sorry!*

**According to the Bible, those are ALL sins;** therefore, let us ✦ be sorry, ✦ look to Jesus, and ✦ change our ways!

4. **Temptation Can Lead to Sin and Death:** <sup>15</sup> Then when lust has conceived [or desire becomes action], it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished [completes its purpose], it brings forth death. // Many things in life have a step-by-step progression; for example: ➔sex—conception—child **OR** ➔greed—theft—prison **OR** ➔desire—sin—death (*eternal death, eternal punishment*).
5. **God's Two Huge Blessings:** <sup>NAU</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. // God does not tempt us; instead, He ➔controls the severity of the temptation – *to keep it within our limits* AND ➔provides a way for us to escape – *to NOT fall into the sin!*

**Conclusion** – See your handout; compare yours with mine:

- **This TRUTH (certainty) from the reading caught my attention:** *I am being tempted with things I desire.*
- **The reading is RELEVANT (applicable) to my life in this way:** *It is dangerous to justify my sins.*
- **The reading INSPIRED (motivated) me to take this action:** *I want to see and take the way of escape.*

**Let Us Pray:** Dear Holy Spirit, make us sensitive and obedient to Your leading, so that we ➔desire what is truly right **and** ➔quickly flee from every temptation!

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