

Sincere Faith:

An Exposition of the Book of James

Sermon Four: Sincere Temptation

June 13, 2021

Opening ILL: “I just don’t sin anymore!” That’s what somebody said one time in a prayer meeting in a previous church. What made it awkward is (1) the person who said this seemed serious, and (2) the person who said it was obviously delusional. There is not a single one of us that does not sin. I think we can all agree on that, right? Okay, but why? Here’s where it gets a little murky. WHY do we sin? James will tell us why this morning. He will tell us that we sin because we want to. We sin because in our hearts we delight in the Lord and we delight in sin. We are double minded (double souled diyucoj) people. To one extent or another, a battle continues in our minds, hearts and affections. This is true of every person in this room, including me.

Quote: Three things make a Preacher: reading, prayer, and temptation. **John Trapp**¹

I. Introduction/Review: Excuses, excuses...

A. Sincere faith leads to a sincere battle against our sin.

Quote: The more easily that a Christian can repel desires and resist temptations to sin, the stronger is his faith. The snare or net, which holds the little fish fast, is broken by a stronger fish. The Christian’s faith is strong or weak as he finds it easy or hard to break from temptations to sin.

B. We make excuses all the time!

1. Adam and Eve made excuses for their sin (Genesis 3:12-13).
 - a. Adam: The woman (who YOU gave me) made me do it. Really, it’s her fault and Your fault!
 - b. Eve: The serpent tricked me. The Devil made me do it!
2. Aaron (Moses’ brother) made excuses for Israel’s sin (Exodus 32:22-24).
 - a. Hey, nobody knew when/if you were coming back!
 - b. I threw in all this gold and a calf came out! Weird, huh?
3. We make excuses for our sin...All the time! Some Examples:
 - a. Everyone cheats in baseball. If we don’t cheat, we have no real chance of winning.
 - b. I have to lie to my wife because she just can’t handle the truth.
 - c. The cop is not going to pull you over unless you are more than 10 miles over the speed limit.
 - d. It doesn’t hurt anybody.
 - e. I need this addiction because of my rough childhood.

II. The Perseverance of the Steadfast (James 1:12)

A. What does it mean to persevere under trials?

1. Well, what it can’t mean is to simply fold, give up and do whatever you want. That’s the opposite of persevering.
2. It must, then, mean to continue in certain ways of thinking and certain ways of acting regardless of when circumstances get difficult.

B. What is the crown of life? [There is a misprint on the notes: righteousness]

Quote: A reward is promised to the Christian who successfully meets the test: the crown of life. The word crown (stephanos) sometimes refers to a royal crown, but is more frequently used of the laurel wreath given to the victorious athlete (see 1 Cor. 9:25) and, figuratively, symbolizes glory and honour. It is this last meaning that fits best here. The crown is the emblem of spiritual success, given by the King of the universe to those who ‘keep their faith’ in the midst of suffering and temptation.²

1. Option #1—the crown that is life

¹ the Puritans day by day, March 4

² Douglas J. Moo, James: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 73.

- a. **Revelation 2:10** Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- 2. **Option #2**—The crown that corresponds to life
 - a. This could be referring to an actual crown that we receive in Heaven.
 - b. There is nothing necessarily wrong with taking it this way.
- 3. **Either way**—The point is that the reward of perseverance is life. This is the direct opposite of what sin produces...death (see v. 15).

C. Who gets this crown?

- 1. Those who love Him.
 - a. This would seem to indicate that all Christians get this.
 - b. This would seem to indicate that all Christians, then, persevere.
 - c. Obviously, some persevere more consistently. Hence the commands in this passage.

III. A Pathetic Slander! (James 1:13)

Point: We are switching from one connotation of *peirazw* to another. “Trials” now will be understood as “temptations.”

Quote: This verse introduces the switch of topics from trials to temptations. James begins, “no one, while being tempted” (μηδεις πειραζόμενος). The verb, obviously cognate to “trial” (πειρασμός), here refers to something that entices one “to improper behavior.”³

A. God made me do it? Really?!

- 1. How might we do this?
 - a. We may directly blame God.
 - i. We may say that since God is sovereign (and He is)
 - ii. and that He is in control of our circumstance (and He is)...we talked about this last week.
 - iii. Then, my sin is His fault.
 - iv. This would be tantamount to some sort of mechanical fatalism.
 - b. We may indirectly blame God.
 - i. When we say that our circumstances make sin inevitable, we are blaming the sovereign God.
 - ii. When we say things like, “If God didn’t want me to do this, He would take away my desire.”
- 2. Why is this wrong?
 - a. Because God cannot be tempted.
 - i. What difference does this make? All the difference in the world.

Quote: The “himself” (αὐτός) serves to strengthen the contrast with the one who tempts us, as well as to emphasize the principle that God does not try to seduce his people to act wickedly. Our God can be turned to in times of temptation, for he does not cause it, James assures us.”⁴

- ii. God’s character is holy and cannot be compromised.
- b. Because God does not tempt.
 - i. He does not entice anyone to disobey Him.
- c. Because we are tempted by what springs up from within.
 - i. Your excuses are all crushed under the weight of the fact that your sin is your fault.
 - a) **I 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.

³ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, [James](#), vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 70. Referring to BDAG, 793.

⁴ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, [James](#), vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 71.

Point: Personally, I find this very liberating. If my sin is caused by my circumstances...I can't really do much about that. If my sin is caused by God, what sort of nightmare would life be? If I am the reason why I sin, then at least to a certain extent, I can work on me!

Transition: That's why it is so important to understand how sin really works in us.

IV. The Progression of Sin (James 1:14-15)

A. Our desires conceive.

1. This is important to remember.
2. Our desires are not dead, passive things. They are active things. They crave. They move...etc.
 - a. We must deal with our sin at this level. Otherwise, it only gets more difficult.

ILL: Children, Puppies, and Problems: These are always best dealt with when they are small.

B. Our sin is born.

1. When we give in to our divided hearts, the result is sin.
2. What we failed to prevent, we now must correct.
 - a. This is where repentance comes in.
 - b. This is where sanctification comes in.

C. Our death is brought forth.

1. The inevitable conclusion of sin is death.
 - a. **Romans 7:9-11** I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.
 - b. **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

V. The Provision of Salvation (James 1:16-18)

A. Every good thing comes from God.

1. There is a danger of being deceived in this (v. 16)
 - a. We may be convinced that we are the reason why good things happen to us.
 - b. We may be convinced that God is somehow beholden to us.
2. Every good thing comes from God as the Father of lights (v. 17a).
3. Every good thing comes from a God who is without variation (v. 17b).

B. Our salvation is a good thing.

1. Would anyone disagree that salvation is good?
2. If everything good comes from God, then mustn't salvation be included in this?
3. Notice what the verse (18) says:
 - a. In the exercise of His will—What does this mean?
 - b. He brought us forth—What does this mean?
 - i. This means that regeneration is a work of God.
 - ii. **1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
 - iii. **Ephesians 2:5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
 - c. By the word of truth—what does this mean?
 - i. This means that the Lord uses the truth to save us.
 - ii. God saves us by convincing us of the truthfulness and beauty of His word.
 - d. So that we would be a kind of first-fruits—what does this mean?
 - i. Among His creatures (?)
 - ii. The idea here seems to be that we are particularly special to God like the first harvest of the year.

VI. The Point of the Sermon (Conclusions)

A. Your sin is your fault!!

1. What does this lead us to?
 - a. Taking responsibility for our actions.
 - b. Fighting our sin with all our might.

B. Your salvation is God's gift.

1. What does this lead us to?
 - a. A refusal to rely on our own works
 - b. A humble reception of His gift

And though we cannot wholly shut Satan out of our imaginations, we should be cautious that we do not willfully provide fuel for his flame; but entreat the Lord to set a watch upon our eyes and our ears, and to teach us to reject the first motions and the smallest appearance of evil.

John Newton