

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 2, 2014 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

THE MAGNIFICENT JOY OF TRIALS

The Trial of Temptation

*James 1:2-4, 1 John 5:4-5, Genesis 3:1-13,
James 1:13-15, Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 4:14-16*

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved.” –Helen Keller

“We are always on the anvil; by trials God is shaping us for higher things.” –Henry Ward Beecher

*“Trials teach us what we are: they dig up the soil, and let us see what we are made of.”
-Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

“To learn strong faith is to endure great trials. I have learned my faith by standing firm amid sever testings.” –George Mueller

“If we desire our faith to be strengthened, we should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried, and therefore, through trial, be strengthened.” –George Mueller

THOUGHT STARTER: Listen as the above quotes are read and answer the following questions for each. You may record your thoughts below.

- (1) *What is the quote saying about trials and how does it compare with what James says in James 1:2-4 (our key passage)?*
- (2) *Do you agree or disagree with the quote? Why or why not?*
- (3) *According to the quote what could be considered a positive from trials?*

“Consider it pure joy, my brother (and sisters) whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” –James 1:2-4 (NIV)

We began our study several weeks ago called “The Magnificent Joy of Trials.” Although it sounds absurd or perhaps at least a little sarcastic that trials should ever be counted a “joy”, we have discovered that maturing in our faith and finding a complete (or whole, full, mature) faith includes times of trial... sometimes great trial. Without them we may never really develop... and nobody, it seems, ever escapes the process. We simply cannot become the people God intends us to be without some headaches and heartaches along the way... some bumps along the road. Just for review we have discovered that when troubles and hardships... trials come we can do a couple of things with it:

2 Possible Responses to Trials:

1. **Trials can be allowed to embitter us** – Often when “trial of many kinds” (as James calls it) come our way, whatever that trial may be (failure, loss, discouragement, heartache, disappointment), it often throws us so off guard... we are so unprepared, that it knocks the wind out of our sails. It may leave us reeling, perhaps hurting so deeply or so confused and bewildered that we find ourselves growing angry... sometimes even mad. We get mad at God, mad at the world and mad at others. We can lash out and allow our pains and disappointments in life to literally embitter us and sour us. We may grow bitter toward God for apparently allowing this to happen to us.
2. **Trials can be allowed to enable us** – That’s what James says. He is telling us that for a believer, the trial we experience in this life can actually serve to enable our faith... to mature us and grow us in the faith so that our faith is complete and not lacking anything. Those trials may actually cause us to draw closer to God than we have ever been in greater dependence and reliance on Him.

So the question is how do I develop and mature in my faith rather than wilt and die in despair and bitterness when I’m hurting or going through a very trying time? How do I turn moments of struggle, and hardship, and difficulty into opportunities to develop my faith? James mentions **“trials of many kinds”** which may also be translated as “many kind of trials” and, let’s face it, there are many kinds of trial that we face in this life. We have talked about a few of these in the past few weeks of this study. .

Where We Have Been: (*2 trials we have explored the past few weeks*)

1. **The trial of waiting**
2. **The trial of failure**
3. **The trial of discouragement**
4. **The trial of fear**
5. **The trial of doubt**
6. **The trial of loss**

The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life (trials of many kinds), we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness,

loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. God desires for you to live an overcoming life! Jesus, Himself, said in John 16:33, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” And in 1 John 5:4-5, “⁴*For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*” ⁵*Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*” Christians are overcomers and truly are to live victorious Christian lives every day, but let’s be honest, there are many trial and struggles, heartaches and difficulties along that way that can daily steal our joy and paralyze our faith, destroy our relationship and weaken our walk... trials of many kinds that can embitter and defeat us if we let them.

This evening we want to take a look at a fifth type of trail that each of us face, and maybe you have never thought of this as a trail. James mentions it in the first chapter of James along with discussion of “trials.” It is the trail of temptation, and it is all too apparent in our lives as believers, but it may be one that often we think we have under control. We often have a mistaken notion that the older we get, the wiser we get, and therefore the less tempted we become. Oh how mistaken we are by the clever deception that this enemy can throw our way. Temptation never goes away on this side of heaven, it just takes on a new face, and it is a trail that we all face on a regular basis. What may have tempted you as a young man may have less appeal to you now, but you can be sure that the enemy of temptation will find a new appeal to you. Henry Ward Beecher said about temptation, “**All men are tempted. There is no man that lives that can't be broken down, provided it is the right temptation, put in the right spot.**” And I love Oswald Chambers’ take on the subject. He said, “**Many of us suffer from temptations from which we have no business to suffer.**”

You see the reality is that few trials in this life plague us more persistently than the trial of TEMPTATION. We are tempted to gossip, to steal, to become rich, and to desire popularity. We’re tempted to take revenge, to be lazy, to overeat, to cheat, to fight, and to yield to sensual desire. We are also tempted to be selfish, to envy, and to hold grudges. Then there comes a time when we are tempted to give up, to quit, to fear, to doubt, to worry! Evil is all about us. We should want to live an insulated life, not an isolated one. We need God’s Word to speak to us on this vital issue as we attempt to diagnose the problem and find victory over this trail that is certain to bombard us daily no matter what age we are. So let’s take a look at the trial we all face called temptation.

I. BACKGROUND OF TEMPTATION... WHAT IT MEANS

The Greek word used in Scripture for “temptation” is the same Greek word (Peirasmos) that is used for ‘temptations’ in some passage of Scripture (Mt 6:13, 1 Cor 10:13, Jas 1:13) and ‘trials’ in other passages (Jas 1:2,12, 1 Pet 1:6).

A Definition: The literal definition of the word “peirasmos,” translated in Scripture as to tempt, or temptation is defined as follows.

Peirasmos – “To put to proof by experiment of good or experience of evil, to scrutinize, entice, discipline, examine, prove, try, tempt.”

2 Meanings Within One Word, Peirasmos: It is important to make a distinction between two meanings within this one word.

1. **Negatively... An attempt to entice someone into evil (Often translated as temptations)** - Satan is the ultimate source of all desires and actions contrary to God. He is the tempter, and He uses the weapon of temptation to lead us into sin... and I might add that he knows just what that weapon of temptation looks like for you. In Matthew, chapter 4, when Satan came to tempt Christ we see He is specifically called "tempter." Just listen to Matthew 4:3, "*The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*" And in 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Paul says it like this, "⁵*For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.*"
2. **Positively... A testing which aims at spiritual good (Often translated as trials)** – James uses the word “peirasmos” in this positive sense in James 1:2-4, “²*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,* ³*because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.* ⁴*Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*” In this sense of the word, “peirasmos” is seen as a positive thing in our lives that produces great fruit.

NOTE: *It is interesting that the Greek word “peirasmos” is sometimes translated as “trials” and sometimes as “temptation” and that the two may sometimes be related, yet distinct. It poses the question is “temptation” a “trial”? The answer is yes. If you have ever truly experienced “temptation” (and we will have) it may definitely be considered a “trial” ... a “trial” of your faith, and finding victory over this trial of temptation is always a point of growth for a believer. Every time you overcome a temptation you grow a little. Another side point... every time you give in to temptation you are likely creating another trial for yourself.*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS (A Lesson in Temptation)

By Portia Nelson

CHAPTER 1

I walk down the street... there is a deep hole in the sidewalk
I fall in... I am lost ... I am helpless... It isn't my fault... it takes me forever to find a way out.

CHAPTER 2

I walk down the same street... there is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it... I fall in again... I can't believe I am in the same place,
But, it isn't my fault... it still takes a long time to get out.

CHAPTER 3

I walk down the same street... there is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there... I still fall in ... it's a habit... my eyes are open
I know where I am... It is my fault... I get out immediately.

CHAPTER 4

I walk down the same street... there is a deep hole in the sidewalk... I walk around it.

CHAPTER 5

I walk down another street.

3 Purpose of Temptation: According to Scripture we may come away with at least three purpose of temptation. These reveal something of the danger of this enemy, temptation.

1. **To undermine God's plan and will (Genesis 3:4-5)** – Remember the words of Satan to Adam and Eve in the Garden when tempting them to sin by disobeying God in Genesis 3:4-5, “⁴ “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
2. **To stray man from God's way (John 10:10)** – Remember Jesus words of caution concerning Satan and his way in John 10:10, “¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
3. **Temptation at its core, is to deny the authority of God and to seek our independence from God (Genesis 3:1)** – Let's go back to the garden one more time and hear Satan's tempting words in Genesis 3:1 “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” “Did God really say...” Did Satan really say that? That is an outright question not only of God word to Adam and Eve, but of His authority to say it. And a temptation to find their independent way from God. How did that work out for them? Listen, temptation is a deadly enemy.

II. THE WAY OF TEMPTATION... HOW IT WORKS

What are the ways of Temptation?

1. **Temptation starts in heart and mind, in our deepest motives and desires (James 1:14-15)** – Listen to James' words in James 1:14-15, “¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” It's present in us! It's there! This enemy is present with us in our hearts and minds... in our desires and motives.
2. **Temptation finds its expression through human desire (1 John 2:16)** - Listen to 1 John 2:16, “¹⁶ For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.” John talks about three most fundamental means of temptation. This is significant that God's Word essentially give us the “modus operandi” (method of procedure) of how temptation works.

3 Modus Operandi of Temptation: How it works!

- (1) **Lust of the flesh** – What your flesh wants
- (2) **Lust of the eyes** – What your eyes like
- (3) **Pride of Life** – What strokes your ego

*These three fundamental principles summarize any temptations we may face in our daily lives.

3. Temptation has been with man from the beginning (Genesis 3:1-6) – Interestingly, Satan used these same devices found in 1 John 2:16 to tempt Adam and Eve way back in the garden of Eden. Listen to it again in verse 1-6 of Genesis 3, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”⁴ “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman.⁵ “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” Did you see it? In verses 5-6.

3 Modus Operandi of Satan in the Garden: How he tempted Adam and Eve!

- (1) Lust of the Eyes – “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye..” (Gen 3:6)
 - (2) Lust of the Flesh – “...tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye..” (Gen. 3:6)
 - (3) Pride of Life – “...and also desirable for gaining wisdom (like God)...” (Gen 3:5-6)
4. Temptation was attempted with our Savior (Mat 4:1-11) - You know the story. Thousands of years after it was first introduced in the Garden of Eden and used successful to defeat God’s most prized possession... man, God in the flesh would experience the attack of the enemy. (READ: Matthew 4:1-11). Interestingly, once again in the garden destroyed... the wilderness (desert), temptation... the same modus operandi would be used.

3 Modus Operandi Used in the Temptation of Christ: Did it work this time and what does that mean for us?

- (1) Lust of the Flesh – “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (Mat 4:3)
- (2) Lust of the Eyes – “the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” (Mat 4:8)
- (3) Pride of Life – “All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me.” (Mat 4:9)

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: Is temptation sin? Can temptation be considered as sin? What do you think?

3 Reasons Temptation is Not Sin:

- 1. Matthew 4:1-11 - No, temptation is not sin because Jesus was also tempted yet didn’t yield... didn’t sin. (Mat 4:1-11)
- 2. Hebrews 4:15 – (READ: Hebrews 4:14-16) “¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One (Jesus) who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

- 3. 1 Corinthians 10:13** - Every Christian is faced with some kind of temptation. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” It’s common to man! In other words, we all face this enemy... its common. The temptation is not the sin, its giving into the temptation... acting on it that is the sin.

Why is it so ‘easy’ to fall or give in to temptation? 3 Suggestions: Why do we see a constant struggle with sin?

1. **Because there is a temporary pleasure in it.** -
2. **Because we choose to** - Hebrews 11:25 says, “*He (Moses) chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.*”
3. **Because of our own human weakness** - We are susceptible to sin because of our frailty due to sinful nature. Remember why God sent the flood... here it is in Genesis 6:5, “⁵ The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” And back to the Garden of Agony with Christ and His disciples... do you remember what He said in Matthew 26:41, “⁴¹ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” We fall so often because we are weak to this enemy of temptation. We need to get stronger!

III. OVERCOMING TEMPTATION... HOW TO FIND VICTORY OVER THE ENEMY OF TEMPTATION

So how can I overcome this enemy, temptation? How do I find victory over this enemy that hits me where I am most weak and vulnerable? How? What are the steps one can take? You know there are not short cuts... not magic pills to take to counteract the attack, never the less, victory is not only possible it is desired for you by the One who gave His life for you. Remember John 10:10, while warning of the attack also said, “*... I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.*” He is cheering for you to win this fight... not only that He is fighting along side of you and many times instead of you to assure your victory. That’s good news. Now how do I fight in practical ways, this enemy that so often defeats me.

Three “P’s” in the Prescription for Victory Over Temptation: The three “P’s” are preparation, perseverance, and planning.

1. **Preparation** - Bible often picture temptation and struggle with sin as a battlefield, it is fighting against temptation and if you want to succeed in the battle, you need to prepare well. So here is how God’s Word says to prepare:

Preparation for the Fight;

- (1) Ready yourself for the battle - (Eph 6:11, 13-17) Ephesians 6:11 says we are to, :”¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

- (2) Watch and pray - (Mk 14:38) Here we go again back to the garden one more time this time from Mark 14:38 and Jesus' instructions to his followers, ^{*"38*} *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*
 - (3) Use the Word of God – (Psalm 119:11) Remember Jesus used the Word of God to attack and overcome all three temptations in the wilderness. We are no better, so spend time in the word of God. Immerse yourself into word of God, study it, memorize it. Remember, you may not have your bible with you when Satan confronts you with some kind of temptation! I love the wonderful word in Psalm 119:11... it's a good one to memorize, *"They word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee (God.)"*
 - (4) Be alert and self-controlled- (1 Pet 5:8) For every Christian, temptation can come in different form. Peter warns us in 1 Peter 5:8-9, ^{*"8*} *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* ^{*"9*} *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."*
 - (5) Stand strong in faith - (Ephesians 6:10, 1 Pet 5:8-9) I love Ephesians 6:10, ^{*"10*} *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."*
2. **Perseverance and Endurance** - So often the battle long and we grow weary, and we just give up and give in. We need to persevere, persist and continue to resist temptation. Don't you think that is the idea Paul had in mind in 1 Corinthians 10:13, ^{*"13*} *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*
3. **Planning: (Strategy)** - Remember that there is always a way to overcome temptation. In the passage we just quoted above we are reminded, *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* There are basically two strategies, which I have discovered in Bible when dealing with temptation.

2 Strategies for Fighting Temptation:

- (1) **Resist or Fightback** - James 4: 7 says to, *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* There are times when you need to fight back and resist the temptation. You need to stand firm.
- (2) **Retreat of Fallback and regroup** - 2 Timothy 2:22 says, *"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness..."* There are times when you need to flee, run away or retreat to escape temptation. Joseph, of the Old Testament, is an excellent example of both of these methods. He tried to resist Potiphar's wife as much as he could, but when the time came, he chose to flee out rather than resist her. (Gen 39: 6-12) I believe that many times, we choose wrong ways, we flee when we need to stand firm, and vice versa. Listen to the rest of James 4:7 and 8, ^{*"7*} *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* ^{*"8*} *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."* I get the idea in that verse that while we are

resisting and standing firm or even retreating and fleeing that God is fighting for us as we are washing our hands and purifying our hearts for Him... so lean most fully on His ability to win that one for you.

"Temptation may even be a blessing to a man when it reveals to him his weakness and drives him to the almighty Savior. Do not be surprised, then, dear child of God, if you are tempted at every step of your earthly journey, and almost beyond endurance; but you will not be tempted beyond what you are able to bear, and with every temptation there will be a way of escape... Watch the morning watch. Do not see the face of man until you have seen the face of God. Before you enter on the day with its temptations, look up into His face and hide His Word in your heart." - F.B. Meyer