

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, July 25, 2012 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

YOU AND YOUR PROBLEMS “The Problem of Temptation” *James 1:13-16*

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters 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 forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2. I walk down the 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.

Questions about Five Short Chapters

1. Responding to Chapter 1... What does Chapter 1 teach us about temptation?
2. Responding to Chapter 2... What does Chapter 2 teach us about temptation?
3. Responding to Chapter 3... What does Chapter 3 teach us about temptation?
4. Responding to Chapter 4... What does chapter 4 teach us about temptation?
5. Responding to Chapter 5... What does Chapter 5 teach us about temptation?

Few things plague us more persistently than 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. 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.

I. **DIAGNOSIS OF TEMPTATION (James 1:13-16)**

Under the inspiration of God's Spirit, James wrote to a group of people undergoing a number of difficulties. They had been severely persecuted for their faith and scattered and were no longer together in a secure group... that in itself brings loneliness and trials. In James 1:1-12, he addresses the problem of trials; in verses 13-16, he addresses the problem of temptation. There is a difference. In the original Greek text, the term "peirasmos" is used for both words. However, the context determines the proper thought... trials or temptations. They are often used interchangeably. After all, temptation is a trial (of faith), and every trial is a temptation (to grumble). Again, when the word appears in the New Testament the context helps us to see which interpretation is meant. There are therefore differences and similarities between trials and temptations. Many people are not sure of the difference between trials and temptations. While admitting that in some circumstances, the difference may be difficult to delineate, the following can, at least, help tell the difference. Although we must not push the distinctions too far, here are examples of the differences:

Differences Between Trials and Temptations

1. **In their ultimate origin... temptations carry the fingerprint of the flesh (your flesh); trials, in some way, carry the fingerprint of God** - Now the temptation part we all understand. The enticement to sin is all around us. It comes from within us. That's James idea in v.14 and following. But the thing you need to realize, however is that this aspect never comes from God. In James 1:13 it says *"When tempted, not one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone."* Temptations do not come from God. Trials, on the other hand, are different. Trials are circumstances of life that are difficult and which cause us to have to depend upon God. God brings or allows trials into our lives not to hurt us but to help us. Listen to Proverbs 17:3, *"The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but the Lord tests hearts."* That's what He's doing – He's testing your heart. Will you trust Him? Will you realize that He is helping you to become more mature? So – "consider it all joy when you encounter various trials." And remember God doesn't tempt you – He tests or trials you. He allowed Satan to test Job (Job 1:6-12). Therefore when we speak of "trial" we see God's fingerprints; when we see temptation, we see our own—or the devil's. Any trial that God sends—death of a loved one or friend, financial reverse, loss, illness, misunderstanding, losing your keys, failure, disappointment, betrayal, abuse, unemployment, depression, accident, loneliness, missing the plane, rejection, not getting that important invitation, or any physical pain—should be seen as something God can use in our life to grow us and mature us in the faith... His fingerprint is on it!

3 Things We Are Not Saying:

- (1) **We are not saying that God delights in your misery** – When James says in James 1:2, *"Count it all joy, my brothers, whenever you face trial of many kinds..."* He is not saying that God enjoys your misfortune and difficulty... that God likes your problems, but rather than God can use your problems to actually grown you.
- (2) **We are not saying that every difficulty and trial that comes in your life is the direct hand of God** – If your home burns down tonight, God didn't burn your home down. He certainly knows it burned down. It didn't catch Him off guard.

He didn't cause it, but He can use that experience in your life to grow you if you let Him. The truth is, we live in a fallen world where sin and the devil roam free, we are not immune to effect of this fallen world. The innocent often suffer along with the not-so-innocent. Nevertheless, God can put his hand (fingerprint) on your life in the midst of the difficulties and do amazing things in us and through us if we let him.

- (3) **We are not saying that trials and difficulty in your life should be seen as some kind of Holy retribution from God for something you have done or not done** – Although there may be times when God is trying to get ones attention through trials, or draw one who is away from Him back to Him; the reality is that there are times when trials come on innocent, unsuspecting lives that are walking wholly consecrated and devoted to God. The saintly suffer to at times.
2. **In their immediate origin... temptation comes from within; trials usually come from outside us** – As James says in verse 14, *“But each one is tempted when, by how own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”* In other words, it comes from our own evil desires within. Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 15:18, *“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart (within), and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart (from within) come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”* Jesus is talking about what come from within. It is from these things that temptation comes. Trials, on the other hand, although sometimes are of our own making are usually those circumstances and challenges from without that come on our lives... sometimes without warning and totally unexpected. Job, is a good example of these kind of trials. His trial came not from within, but without.
 3. **In their moral relevance... temptation usually has considerable moral relevance; trial may be more morally neutral** – Here is what I mean, temptation usually has morality overtones such as the lure sexual sin, or the temptation to dishonesty, or cheating, or selfish ambition, or lying, or greed, or such... whereas, trials trend to deal more with questions of a morally neutral nature such as an illness or losing one's keys, or dealing with job loss. These, of course, can involve or lead to moral questions at times, but usually the trial itself is not really of a moral nature... not always the case, but usually.
 4. **With reference to what is tested... temptation will usually attack a weak spot, trials test our strength as well as exposing a weakness we may have been unaware of** – It seems that Satan always knows where to dangle the bait in our lives, doesn't He? That's is temptation and how it works. It picks on the place where you are the most vulnerable. Trials, on the other hand, usually prove our faith or where we are spiritually. They may reveal a weakness, but they are mean to grow us in that place.
 5. **Temptations appeal to and manipulate ones' affinity to pleasure; trials challenge one to pay the price for what he cherishes** – David's fall into sin with Bathsheba was begun with temptation, David's loss of the child conceived in that illicit affair was a trial.

6. **Temptations are meant to be resisted; trials are meant to be endured** – I love 1 Peter 5:8-9, “*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, stand firm in the faith...*” Do you see it? Satan and temptations he throws at us are meant to be resisted. And we are to “stand firm” in the trial of our faith.
7. **In temptations, you are expected not to give in, in trials, you are expected not to give up** -
8. **Temptations thrill us; trials grill us** – Someone has said, “Sin is fun for a season!” Sin always has an allure, a draw. The hook is hidden inside. Trials, on the other hand, can really take us through the fire... we can really feel like we are being grilled and tested.
9. **We pray: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil... the trials. In other words, if it is temptation, avoid it; if it is trial go through it** -
10. **The Lord makes a way of escape for us if it is temptation; He gives us the strength to persevere through it if it is trial** -

4 Principles That Apply to Temptation

1. **Temptation is inevitable (v.13a)** – “*When tempted, no one should say...*” (v.13a). Notice the issue is not one of “if,” but “when.” None of us can live without temptation. It is common to every man. The monk living behind the monastery wall wrestles with temptation just as the businessman who may work in a busy downtown area or a young teenage boy or girl struggle with moral limits. **Perspective: The Lord does not make us feel guilty because we have temptation or having tempting things come before us. In other words, temptation is not equal to sin. The issue has to do with our response when temptation comes before us.**
2. **Temptation is never directed by God (v.13)** – “*When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me...’*” (v.13). The question of agency is a particularly critical one in this discussion of temptation. How is God related to temptation? There are two different ways of describing agency in the original language of the New Testament... either directly or indirectly. James spoke of “indirect agency.” Put another way, he writes, “Let on one say that God is even indirectly involved in my actions.” The point is that God is not even indirectly engaged in bringing us into sin. When we sin it is solely our choice. Note the concluding phrase of **verse 13, “For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”**
3. **Temptation is an individual matter (v.14)** – “*But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed*” (v.14). Nothing is strong enough outside of us to alone cause sin. Sin occurs when we agree to the temptation and get involved with it. (see **1 Corinthians 10:13, “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.”)

4. **Temptation that leads to sin always follows the same process (vv.14-15)** – *“But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it give birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, give birth to death”(vv.14-15).* Put in simple terms here are four steps of that process:

4 Steps in the Temptation Process

Step 1: The outer bait is dropped

Step 2: The inner desire is attracted to the bait

Step 3: Sin occurs with the yielding

Step 4: Sin results in tragic consequences

Comment: Between the third and fourth steps, there is a temporary period of pleasure. Satan’s lie is that we will receive pleasure or gain by involving ourselves in certain acts. The pleasure occurs, but he doesn’t tell us that it is temporary... fleeting.

II. SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Temptation is counteracted by self-control... a character quality made possible by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The word literally means strength. In other words, self-control is inner strength. It comes from the Spirit, but we must pave the way for it in our lives.

5 Helps in Overcoming Temptation:

- 1. Counteract temptation... do not tolerate it** - Romans 6:13 says, *“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.”*
- 2. Use the right resistance** – Here are some good examples for handling a wandering eye: Job 31:1, *“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.”* And Proverbs 4:25 says, *“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.”*
- 3. Remind yourself that the final pain will soon erase the temporary pleasure** – Listen to what the great faith chapter says about Moses in Hebrews 11:24-25, *“²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”*
- 4. Control your thought life through memorizing God’s Word** - Psalms 119:9-11, *“⁹ How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. ¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”* And in Matthew 4:1-11 we have the temptation for Jesus. How did Jesus respond to the temptations that came at Him? He quoted Scripture.
- 5. Do battle on a daily basis** - Hebrews 3:12-13 says, *“¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³*

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." And in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "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.