“How To Win Over Temptation”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 4 of 15 –January 27, 2013, SFBC

 James 1:12-18

Today, we want to look, at what God has to say, about man's, oldest problem, . . . **temptation**. It goes all the way, back to Adam. We all, eventually, face it. Sometimes, even when you know, what's right to do, it's difficult, to say "No". It is difficult. Oscar Wilde once said, "I can withstand anything, . . . except, temptation." The only way, to get rid of temptation, . . . is to, give into it.

The Bible, talks about two different, . . . kinds of testing. One is called, trials. The other, is called, temptation. Both of them, use the same word, in Greek -- "peirasmos". Sometimes, it's translated "trials", . . . sometimes "temptations". It doesn't matter, . . . because, sometimes, a situation can be both, . . . a trial, and, a temptation. But, to distinguish them -- trials are situations, designed by God, . . . in order to, help us grow. Temptations, are designed, by the devil, . . . in order to, cause us, to sin.

James 1:12 – *"Blessed is the man, who endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive, the crown of life, which the Lord has promised, to them, that love him."* There is a prize, a reward, . . . for enduring, temptation.

First, it said, "blessed" -- happy. Happiness, comes from having your life under control, . . . so that, there is no bad habit, . . . that is devastating you. When you know, how to say "no" to temptation, . . . it produces happiness, . . . in your life.

It also says, . . . there is a "crown of life". In the Greek, this literally means, . . . "life itself". James says, when you understand temptation, when you overcome it, when you learn to say "no", . . . then, you begin, to really live. It is a crown, which is life -- abundant life -- itself. The question is, . . . How? How do I, . . handle temptation? How do I say, “no”, . . . when, I want to say, “yes”?

\*\*\*\* James, being the practical apostle, that he is, . . . gives us **five principles**:

**1. Be Realistic**. Face the fact: You will, be tempted. Even Christians, are tempted. All of us, are tempted. It says, . . . *"When tempted, . . ."* not, "if tempted, . . ." It's just, like trials, . . . temptations, are inevitable. Have you ever met, a pious person, who says, "I thank God, . . . I have never been tempted, in 42 years!"

That's what you get, . . when you cross a crocodile, and an abalone -- a crock of baloney. Everybody's, tempted. You're tempted. I'm tempted. Every day, . . . we're tempted. You never, get too old, for it. You never, overcome it, by getting, too spiritual. Everybody's, tempted. The more you grow, toward the Lord, the more, . . . you're going to, be tempted. It's a fact, of life. Reality is, . . . all of us, . . . are tempted.

There's a misconception, that says, . . . once you're born again, you've got it all together. You've arrived, so you fake it, and wear a mask, and pretend like, “How could anybody, do something, like that?” We all, . . . are tempted. I Corinthians 10:13 – *"No temptation, has seized you, except, what is common, to man."*

Circle "common to man" -- that means, we're all, in the same boat. We all have, the same temptations, the same problems. Don't be surprised, . . or, shocked. Don't try, to hide it. Some of you, may be, . . . caught in a compromising situation, right now, . . . but, it is liberating to know, that other people, feel the same way, you do. We all, have the same struggles, . . . and, problems.

It is not a sin, to be tempted. It is a sin, . . . to give in, to temptation. Hebrew 4:15 – *"Jesus was tempted, in all points, like as we are, yet, he sinned not."* He was, perfect. He was tempted, . . . but, He never, gave in. It's not a sin, . . . to be tempted. It's a sin, . . . to give in, to temptation.

There are a lot of Christians, . . . who are intimidated, . . . by temptation. They think, "How could I have, such a thought?" The devil, put it in your mind; it's not, your fault. You, . . . are human. Temptation proves, you're human, . . . not, that you're evil. It's not a sin, to be tempted, . . it's a sin, to give in, to temptation. The more, committed you are, . . . the more, you're going to, be tempted.

**2. Be Responsible**. Accept . . responsibility. Don't blame, other people, for your problems. We love, to blame people, even God. James 1:13 – *"When tempted, no one should say, `God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted, by evil, nor does He, tempt anyone."* God does not tempt, . . . but, we love, to blame others.

Will Rogers said, you could summarize American history, into two great movements: the passing of the buffalo, and, . . . the passing of the buck. We are in a society, . . . of irresponsibility. Blame society, blame the government, blame the environment, blame heredity, blame your parents, blame your spouse, blame the devil, . . even, blame God. Some people say, "It must be God's will, or He wouldn't have, let it happen."

That's called, blaming God. One time, a guy said, "God told me to leave my wife, and, go marry someone else." That's called, blaming God. Don't make your bad choices, . . and, then blame them, on God. God does, not tempt. He never contradicts, His word. God is not going to tell you one thing, and, have the Bible, say something different. If the Bible says something, and you say something different, . . you're wrong. Be responsible. Don't blame God, . . . and, don't blame, other people. It's a sign, . . . of immaturity.

The fact is, I bring most of my problems, onto myself. So, do you. We bring them, . . on ourselves. If I'm ever, going to break those bad habits, . . . I want to get rid of, . . . first, I have to be realistic: I am tempted. Then, number two, . . . I've got to, be responsible. I quit passing the buck, . . . and, making excuses.

**3. Be Ready**. When temptation comes, . . . be ready. Be prepared, for it. Peter says, *"Be on, your guard."* Jesus said, *"Watch and pray, that you enter not, into temptation."* Paul said, *"Put on the whole, armor of God".* Be ready, . . . be prepared.

James 1:14, 16 – *"Each one, is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away, and enticed. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers, . . ."* Circle "deceived" -- we need to be ready, . . . and, prepared, . . . for temptation. Temptation does not warn you, in advance. One of the reasons, it's a temptation, is because, you don't even know, it's there. It catches you, by surprise. You've got to be ready, and on your guard.

We are most vulnerable, . . . after a tremendous, success. We think, we're doing, OK. The Bible says, *"Let him who thinks he standeth, take heed, lest he fall." A guy named,* Bobby Leach, . . . went over Niagara Falls, in a barrel, . . . and came out, unharmed. A couple of days later, he slipped on an orange peel, and broke his leg. It's the little things in life, that kill us. James is saying, “Be ready, . . don't, be deceived.”

How do you prepare, . . . for temptation? How do you, get ready, for it? By understanding, . . how, it operates.

 2 Corinthians 2:11 – *"In order that Satan, might not, outwit us, . . . we are not unaware, of his schemes."*

 God wants you to know, how the devil operates, how he tempts. The only thing you can say, about the devil, . . . that's good, is this: he's consistent. He's been using, the same old bag of tricks, for 2000 years, and, longer. It's very easy, to discover, his process. Temptation is a process, never, just, a one-time act.

**\*\*\*\* James outlines the four steps, . . . that, the devil uses, . . . in order to tempt you.**

1. James 1:14a – *"Each one, is tempted when, by his own evil desires, ."* -- the first step of temptation, is desire. It's an, inside job. Most desires, are OK. You couldn't live, without desires: a desire to eat, drink, sleep, the desire, to accomplish. God gives us, . . these desires. Those are, good desires. They are, good gifts.

But, any desire, out of control, . . . becomes destructive. Satan loves to take routine desires, . . . and, turn them, . . . into runaway desires. You are consumed, obsessed by it: food, work, fun, sex, money. Legitimate desires, . . . but, when they are out of control, . . . they become, a problem.

Temptation, is like steel, in a magnet. There's an inward, and outward part. There's an, outward circumstance. But, there's an inward drive, desire. If it wasn't for the inward desire, you wouldn't be tempted. It starts, on the inside. It's often the fulfillment, of a legitimate desire, . . . in the wrong way, at the wrong time. It always starts, . . . with the desire.

2. The second step, is deception. James 1:14b – *"He is dragged away, and enticed, . . ."* James uses, a couple of terms, from the sports world. The word, "dragged away", is a hunter's term, which literally means, . . "snared in a trap". "Enticed", is a fisherman's term, which means, "lured by bait". The secret, of great fishing, is in the bait. The right kind of bait, for the right kind of fish. How many fish, will you catch, with a bare hook? You've got to put bait on it, . . . and, the right kind of bait, for the right kind of fish.

What kind of bait, . . . does the devil use, . . . on you? He knows, your hot button. He knows, your weakness. He knows you, . . . inside and out. He knows, . . . what turns you on. He knows, what you will, fall for. He hides, his hook, in his bait, . . . and, the bait appeals, . . . to your weakness.

The crazy thing is, that often, we see the hook, and we know it's a temptation, . . but, we keep right on nibbling. People say, "Back off. I know, what I'm doing. I'm an adult. I'm not going, to get hurt. I know, how far to go." And, that person, . . . is deceived. They've gone, to step two -- **from desire, . . to deception**.

It always starts, with the desire. Then, Satan moves, . . . to deception. Temptation, always looks better, . . than, it really is. Desire, turns to deception, . . . and, deception, . . . turns to, disobedience.

3. Disobedience. James 1:15 – *"Then, after desire, has conceived, it gives birth, to sin."* What begins, in your mind, . . . results in, an action. It starts, . . in your imagination. The battle starts, . . . with your thoughts. It moves, from your thoughts, into actions. First the devil, gets your attention, . . . then, he gets you, to have an attitude, . . . then, he gets you, to commit, the action.

He knows, . . if he can get your attention, . . . he will eventually, . . . get you, to commit, the action. People say, "What's the danger, in a harmless fantasy?" What starts in your mind, eventually, . . . comes out, in your life. It always begins, . . . in the imagination. What you flirt with, . . . you will fall for.

That's the whole purpose, . . . behind, television advertising. They try to get you, . . . to imagine something. They know, if they can get it in your imagination, . . they've, got you. If that didn't work, nobody would advertise. We're silly, to think, that's not true. You think, you haven't done anything, . . . but, you have.

The Bible says, what starts in your mind, . . eventually, comes out, in your lifestyle. Desire, leads to deception, . . . deception, leads to disobedience. Disobedience, . . . leads, to death.

4. Death. James 1:15 – *"Sin, when full grown, . . . gives birth, to death."* That's the tragic consequence, . . . of giving in. That's what, losing the battle, causes -- devastating results. What is, . . . death? The exact opposite, . . . of living. If you overcome temptation, you get the crown of life, . . . but, the wages of sin, are death – spiritual separation, . . . from God.

James says, we are free, to choose any way, we want to live. I could choose, any way I want to live, and so can you. God gave me, the freedom, . . . of choice. I could choose, to live any way I want to. But, I am not free, . . . to choose, the consequences, . . of the choices. I am free to have my kicks, . . but, I am not free, to eliminate, the kickbacks. I am free, to make choices, but, I'm not free, . . to choose, the consequences.

In order, to overcome temptation, in order, to break a bad habit, . . . first, I've got to be realistic, . . . and, admit, I have a problem. Then, I've got to be responsible, and not blame anybody else, and quit making excuses. Then, I get ready, by understanding what happens, during temptation, . . . so, I can learn how, to avoid it.

\*\*\* All of a sudden, in verse 17, James switches gears. He starts talking, about the goodness, of God. It looks like, he forgot, what he was talking about -- at first. James 1:17 – *"Every good, and perfect gift, is from above, coming down, from the Father, of the heavenly lights, who does not change, like shifting shadows."*

James is talking about temptation, . . then, all of a sudden, he redirects, our thoughts, to the goodness, . . of God. First, he's talking about something negative, then he's talking about something positive. He's refocusing, our attention, . . . on something else. Why? Because, that's the next step, . . . in overcoming, temptation. Be realistic, . . . be responsible, . . . be ready, . . . be refocused.

**4. Be Refocused**. If temptation begins, with our inner thoughts, then, changing what we think about, . . . is the key, to overcoming it. This is the principle, of replacement, . . . the key to overcoming, temptation. The key to overcoming temptation, is not to fight temptation, . . . but, simply refocus, your thoughts. Change, . . . your attention. Turn your attention, . . to something else. Shift, your thoughts. Change, your mind. Refocus.

Instead of looking at, what you're being tempted by, . . . just, look somewhere else. Refocus. Philippians 4:8 says, *"Think on these things, things that are good, positive, just, honest."* Focus your mind, . . . on the goodness, of God. Why? Because, the more you fight a feeling, . . . the more, it grabs you. Don't focus on, . . . what you don't want. Focus on, . . . what you do want. Turn, your attention. Be, refocused. Get your eyes, . . . off the negative.

Get your eyes, . . . on the goodness, of God. Are you, . . . a chronic worrier? It's because, you're doubting, the goodness, of God. Whatever gets your attention, . . . gets you. Whatever you resist, . . . persists. Stop fighting it, . . . just, refocus. Turn your back, on it. How do you, get out of depression? Not by looking at, . . . what you are down about, and telling yourself, there’s no hope. That never, . . . changes you.

Focus on what you want, . . . *"This is the day, the Lord has made. I will rejoice, . . . and, be glad."* It's a choice. *"I will bless the Lord, at all times, . . . His praise, will continually, be in my mouth, . . . I can do all things, through Christ, who strengthens me."* Get God's Word, in your mind, and refocus. Quit fighting, the feeling. What you resist, . . . persists. You can't fight, a feeling. But, if you ignore it, you weaken it.

Don't try to argue, . . . with the devil. He's a lot better at it, . . . then, you are. He's had thousands of years, . . of experience. When temptation calls, . . drop the receiver, and forget it. When you refocus, it may mean, physically removing yourself, from the situation. If you don't want to get stung, get away from the bees.

Maybe, you need to, change the channel, . . . on the TV. Maybe, you need to, walk out of that movie. Maybe, you need to, change jobs. Maybe, you need to change a car pool.

Joseph, was in a tempting situation, and, he left his coat, and ran. If you have to leave your coat, . . . leave your coat. Walk out. Run, flee! I Corinthians 15:33 – *"Bad company, corrupts, good character."* You know your weakness, . . . and, God does to. Maybe, you need, . . . to be redirected.

James 1:18 – *"He chose, to give us birth,* [circle "birth"], *through, the Word of truth, that we might be, a kind of first fruit, of all, that He created."* He's not talking about, . . . physical birth. He's talking about, . . being spiritually born. A rebirth. Starting over, . . . with God.

**5. Be Reborn**. The single most important principle, in breaking bad habits, and getting control of your life, . . . is to let God, . . . have control of it. Get Him in your life, . . . so, He can start changing, your character.

Being born again, gives you a new capacity, . . to resist temptation. You don't have enough power, in your own willpower. That's why, you keep falling. You need some, supernatural power. You need Jesus Christ, in your life. That's, what it means, . . . to be reborn. It means, you get a fresh start, . . . on life. Ask, Christ in.

Ask Him, to make the changes, . . . and, give you the power you need, . . . to do what you know, is right to do, anyway. You will not be able, to say no to temptation, . . . until, you first learn, . . . to say yes, to God. You need, His power, in your life. You need to not only be redirected, and, these other things, . . . but, you need to be reborn. That's, the starting point. Then, you'll have more, . . . than just, your own power.

What is your, . . . most vulnerable area, this morning? What is your, weak spot? God, knows it. The devil, . . . knows it. Have you ever, figured it out? If you haven't, you need to, because, once you've figured out, where you're weak, . . . you will know, when and where, you're most likely to fall, and you can avoid it.

It's stupid, to put yourself in situations, . . . that, will automatically, . . tempt, your weakest area. Where are you, vulnerable? Be realistic, about the problem. Where do I have, a lack of self- control? Is it, my temper? Is it, my appetite? Is it, spending? Is it, my words -- I'm continually, talking all the time, and say things, I later regret? Is it, drinking? Is it, drugs? Is it, . . . lustful thoughts?

What is the area, that Satan knows, is my hot button, and he's always baiting me, in that area? Figure it out, and then, admit it to God. Say, "God, You know the areas, . . . I've fallen in. I've stumbled. I want, a clean slate. I want to, start over. Get free, of the past. Get forgiveness. That's, available. Then salvation, is the first step, . . . in victory, over temptation. Ask Christ, to come into your life, and give you the power.

I Corinthians 10:13 – *"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 you can stand up, under it."* What a, great promise!

God never, puts more on you -- He never allows, more on you – than, He puts in you, to bear it up! You say, "I just, couldn't help myself!" Wanna bet? "It was too strong, of a temptation, I just couldn't help myself!" God says, . . . that, is not true. You're just, depending on yourself, . . . instead, of depending, on Him.

God says, "I will make a way out, if you trust Me." The fact is, there is hope, . . . and, you can change, . . if you want to, and if you'll let Christ change you, from the inside out. There is a way out, if you trust in Him.

You can't pray "Lord, lead us not, into temptation", . . . if, at the same time, you're flirting, . . . with temptation. You've got to, co-operate. Some of you, are flirting with temptation, in many different areas. Satan is baiting you, . . . for a trap.

\*\* What is it, that you want, in your life, so badly, . . . that, you're willing to compromise, . . . in order, to get it?

 A promotion? A thrill? Confess it, . . to God. The time, to deal with temptation, is right, . . at the start. When it starts, . . . in the desire stage, . . . nip it, in the bud. (Barney Fife, . . . great philosopher.)

Martin Luther said, "We cannot keep the birds, from flying over us, but, we can keep them, from making a nest, . . in our hair." You cannot live, in a temptation free, world. It's all, around you. It's not a sin, . . . to be tempted. So, don't be intimidated, by it. It is a sin, when you begin to dwell on that temptation, . . . and, think about it, . . . so, that, it eventually, begins to take form, in your life, and heart.

**\*\*\*\* Resources you need in order to fight temptation:**

1. Fellowship with, other Christians. You will not make it, if you do not have fellowship, with other Christians. We were not meant, . . . to fight the battle, . . . by ourselves. Get involved, with some Christian friends. Get involved, . . . in a Bible study, a small group.

Find a place, where you can share, meet some friends, then, begin to share, . . on a gut level. Share the problem, you're struggling with. We are all, in the same boat. Temptations, . . are common, to man. When you're able to talk about a problem, . . . you are able, to get control of it.

Revealing your feelings, . . . is the beginning, of healing. If you hold it in, and you don't tell anybody, . . it just, gets worse, . . . and, becomes something, that scares you to death.

2. Get into God's Word. The Bible, is our secret weapon, against temptation. It is, the truth. Jesus said, *"You will know the truth, and the truth, will set you free."* Do you want to be free, . . . from, that bad habit?

Fill your mind, with this book. Refocus, on it. Instead of, thinking about what's getting you down, . . . get your mind, on what's good, . . . whatever is true, and just, and holy. Study it, memorize it, meditate on it. Fill your life with it, and get into a Bible study. If you know the truth, it will keep you, from being deceived.

If you want to know, how Satan attacks, . . . study the Bible. What is, the payoff? *"Blessed (happy), is the man, who endures temptation, .* . . (it's that good feeling, of self-confidence, and self-esteem, . . . because, you realize, you're not being controlled, by anything, except the Lord) *. . . when he is tried, he shall receive, the crown, which is life, . . .* (you begin, to enjoy, the abundant life) *. . . which, the Lord has promised, to them, that love Him."*

“How To Win Over Temptation”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 4 of 15

James 1:12-18

*"Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him."* (vs. 12 KJV)

"Peirasmos" :

Trials (from God) - to help us grow

Temptations (from Satan) - to cause us to sin

**HOW CAN I WIN OVER TEMPTATION?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs.13a)

*"when tempted ... "*

1 Corinthians 10:13 – “*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.”*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 13b)

*"When tempted, no one should say, `God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone."*

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 14-16)

*"Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires, he is dragged away and enticed ... Don't be deceived, my dear brothers."*

 2 Corinthians 2:11 – “*In order that Satan might not outwit us, we are not unaware of his schemes.”*

**HOW TEMPTATION WORKS (vs. 14-15)**

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desires ... "*

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"... he is dragged away and enticed ..."*

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin"*

\* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *"and sin, when full grown gives birth to death."*

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 17)

James 1:17 – “*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”*

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 18)

1 Corinthians 10:13 – “*. . . 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!"*

\*\* Resources you need in order to fight temptation:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_