

**I Believe... So Now What?!**  
**(Week 2)**  
**James 1:12-25**  
**“Living The Blessed Life”**

**Introduction**

**“Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.” James 1:12**

“Blessed” (*makarios* in the Greek). The word actually means “happy”. But, in the case of James’ writing, I believe that it means much more than that. James, as you well know, was Jewish, and as such, I believe the type of “blessed” to which he is referring, as well as Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, is Hebrew in origin and comes from **Psalm 1**:

**“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the Law of The LORD, and who meditates on His law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers.”**  
**Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)**

The Hebrew word for “Blessed” is *esher*, and it carries a much deeper meaning. The root word of *esher* means *to take something and lay it out straight*, such as a length of rope laid out straight upon the ground. *Esher*, therefore, is the true joy that one feels when he or she knows that they are right with or “straight” with God. For the child of God, knowing that their lives are in perfect alignment with God’s will brings a sense of joy and fulfillment that no lost person could ever hope to understand.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the blessing that comes from being right with God (**Matthew 5-7**). James also wanted his readers to understand that those who align themselves with God’s truth will find great blessing and contentment. Not only that, but those who overcome the trials and temptations of this life because their love for Christ will receive a “crown of life” (**vs. 12**). The Greek word used here for “crown” is “*Stephanos*”, which was the type of crown given to olympic champions in James’ day. It is a “victors crown”, symbolic of those who overcome temptation and follow after righteousness. It is not so much the crown that we are after, but Christ. We shall receive this crown of life everlasting, because our love for Christ has triumphed over all the fiery darts that Satan has thrown at us. We will be victorious, if we endure to the end, and Christ Himself shall be our true reward, not the crown (**James 1:12; Revelation 2:10**).

In **verses 13-25**, James sets before us two paths; a path that leads to death and a path that leads to life. Sin is prevalent in this filthy world, and it longs to destroy us, but God has predestined us for something much better. He wants us to have victory. And, James doesn’t just tell us that God desires this for us, but he tells us just how to attain this victory to receive the victors “crown of life”. Now I don’t know about you, but I want to be victorious over sin. I want all that God has for me. I want to have the joy and peace of knowing that I am “straight” with God, perfectly aligned to His will for my life. If this is also the desire of your heart this morning, then James will tell you exactly how to achieve it. We do it by **Resisting** temptation and **Receiving** the Word of God.

**Resisting Temptation**

**“No one undergoing a trial should say, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ since God is not tempted by evil, and He doesn’t tempt anyone. But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.”**  
**James 1:13-16**

In the first part of this chapter, James speaks of tribulations that all believers have to endure. Now he focuses his attention on the temptations that we all face. No one is exempt from temptation, even Christ was tempted **“in all things yet never sinned” (Hebrews 4:15)**. James wanted his readers to understand that they would all be subjected to various temptation in this world. The second thing that he wanted them to understand is that when we are tempted to sin, we should not blame God for it.

God is absolutely holy (**Isaiah 6:1-8**). He is repulsed by sin, and therefore, it would go against His very nature to tempt someone to sin. In the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to place the blame on everyone except on whom it belonged. Eve basically said that the “devil made her do it”. While Adam blamed Eve, and then he even insinuated that it was partially God’s fault for giving him Eve in the first place!

**“The man replied, ‘The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.’ So The LORD asked the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” Genesis 3:12-13**

You see, we never like admitting that sin is our fault. I mean, there just **has** to be someone else to blame. Why, if it weren’t for that, then we’d be **perfect**, now wouldn’t we? James allows his readers no such excuse. It’s not God’s fault when we sin, it’s not even the devil’s... It’s **ours**. Do you realize that the first step necessary to finding forgiveness is to own up to our sin? We can’t find grace, until we are willing to accept fault. After all, if we weren’t at fault, then we wouldn’t need grace, now would we? James, in his usual style, doesn’t pull any of his punches when talking about our moral failures. When we sin, it is because we have been “drawn away” and “enticed” by the evil that is within us! Welcome to the “no spin zone”! We sin, because we are sinners. Imagine that. No one will ever be able to stand in God’s presence and claim any moral superiority.

**“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

**Romans 3:23**

Now I know what you are going to say, “Pastor, that verse is about lost people”. And you would be correct. **Romans 3:23** is explaining that everyone who has ever lived is a sinner. But *The Bible* also tells us that believers sometimes sin. **1 John** was written to believers, and it plainly tells us:

**“If we say, ‘We have no sin’, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”**  
**1 John 1:8**

So we know that we all sin. James is admonishing us to stop sinning. In order to defeat an enemy, it is important to know how his strategy works. James gives us insight into just how we manage to fall into sin. He uses the analogy of conception and birth. It takes two parents to produce offspring, and in this case, James wants us to understand that it takes two “parents” to produce sin in us. One is temptation, and the other is desire. The temptation will be offered by an external source, while the desire lies within our own sinful fleshly nature.

As an outdoorsman, I understand perfectly the analogy that James is giving here about giving in to temptation, because of a sinful desire that lies within us. The two Greek words that he uses for “drawn away” and “enticed” are sportsman’s words. The first “*exelko*” translated “drawn away” is a hunter’s word. It carries with it the idea of enticing or luring big game into a snare. It literally means to bait a trap. The second word “*deleazo*” translated “enticed” is a word used to describe a fishing lure.

James is telling us that the devil will lure us with a bait that he knows will appeal to the sinful desires that lie within us. Just like a good hunter or angler, he is smart enough to know just what kind of bait to use. What would work on me, wouldn’t necessarily work for you and vice versa. Simply put, different types of fish will hit different types of lures. Make no mistake, the devil knows exactly which one will work best on you! He will entice you to a sin that appeals to your own desires, and when you “take the bait”, as it were, sin is conceived. If that sin is not quickly repented of and renounced, then it will do what all sin is born to do... destroy you in the end. How many famous leaders have we seen brought low by their own lustful desires. When sin has finished with them, they lose their testimony and influence. They are as good as dead spiritually speaking. King David was the hero of Israel. The people loved and respected him, but after his sin with Bathsheba, his life was never the same. Even his own family rebelled against him. That is what sin does. While God is about handing out free gifts to His children, the

devil never gives away anything for free. All his “gifts” come with a price-tag, just as all fishing lures come with a hook.

If sin remains unchecked in a believer, it can cost him, not only his testimony, but his life. John warns us of a sin that leads to death:

**“If anyone sees a fellow believer committing a sin that doesn’t lead to death, he should ask, and God will give life to him — to those who commit sin that doesn’t lead to death. There is sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that doesn’t lead to death.”**

**1 John 1:16-17**

Notice that John says that the **“sin that leads to death”** is committed by a **“fellow believer”**. This means that when God deems a believer’s unrepentant sin to be so egregious as to bring dishonor to the kingdom, God will cut that believer’s earthly life short. Though they do not lose their salvation, they most certainly can lose their life. Sin is serious business, and God never wants us to take it lightly. When the devil tempt us, we must resist. In fact, when we resist, God will bless us for it. What the devil would use to lure us away, God allows, so that we will learn to resist and pass the test. In that way :

**“All things work together for good, to those who love God, who are called accord to His purpose.”**

**Romans 8:28**

You see, God doesn’t tempt us, but He allows it, not so that we will give in, but so that we will have victory! He has predestined better things for you than you’re giving in to temptation. He longs for you to succeed and not fail! Just read the book of Job. What Satan intended was for Job to curse God, but what God intended was for Job to demonstrate his love for God through the trials. God most certainly didn’t want Job to fail. He wanted him to shine!! In fact, He was counting on it. This is what James means when he says:

**“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, Who does not change like shifting shadows. By His own choice, He gave us birth by The Word of Truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.”**

**James 1:17-18**

Simply put, this means that God chose you and has a plan for your life. He doesn’t ever change or waiver from that plan. He wants you to have victory in Christ. He wants to empower you to overcome the temptations in this world. He wants you to have mastery over your flesh. Every time you say no to temptation, and yes to holiness, you are one step closer to realizing all that God has for you. He wants nothing but the best for you. That is why He *allows* you to be tested in the first place. So just say no to temptation!

## **Receiving The Word**

**“By His own choice, He gave us birth by the Word of Truth so that we would be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. My brothers and sisters understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for human anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness. Therefore, ridding yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, humbly RECEIVE the implanted Word, which is able save your souls. But be doers of The Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of The Word, and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works — this person will be blessed in what he does.”**

**James 1:18-25**

Now, if James had just told us to “stop sinning” and obey the Word, then we would have been right back under *Old Testament* Law. We know from experience that this isn’t possible. No, James tells us that something else must first happen to empower us to obedience. And just what is that? Answer: **Rebirth (vs.18)**. Just as it takes two things, Temptation and Desire, to conceive and produce death in us, it also requires two things to conceive and produce life in us. What are those two things? The Spirit and The Word.

When Nicodemus, the Pharisee, came to Jesus that fateful night in **John Chapter 3**, Jesus told him that in order to be what God wanted him to become, He had to be “Born Again”.

**“Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and The Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of The Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again.”**

**John 3:5-7**

The only possible way that we can EVER hope to overcome sin is to be reborn of The Spirit of God. Our flesh doesn’t have the power to get it done. We need to be born again. This is what James is referring to when he says that God has chosen to give us “birth by The Word of Truth” (**vs. 18**). The “first fruit” thing was just a very Jewish way of James telling his church that they were among the first of many born again believers that were sure to come. Literally, **multitudes** have been reborn by the Spirit and The Word since James first wrote this letter. But it always happens in the very same way. How does this happen do you ask? The Spirit of God reveals to us the truth of God’s Word. We then believe in the gospel message of Christ, and turn to Him for forgiveness, and are saved. Then the Holy Spirit comes to live within us, and He gives us not only an understanding of God’s Word, but an intense hunger to know it, grow in it, and live by it. And this work of The Spirit within us is “living proof” that we have been reborn to life!

Show me someone who calls themselves a “Believer”, who does not possess a hunger for God’s Word, along with an intense desire to live by it, and I’ll show you someone who is deceiving themselves. All who have been truly “born again” will long for The Word, for it was the Word that caused them to be born again in the first place! The Word of God shows us for what we are and leads us to pray in repentance. The Word makes us desire to be transformed into the image of Christ. James tells us that anyone who can hear The Word and does not desire to be changed by it, is like someone who looks in a mirror and sees the awful mess they are in, but doesn’t want that mess to be fixed. If The Spirit has indeed come to live in us, then He will most certainly lead us to be “doers of the Word and not hearers only!”

The more time that a born-again believer spends in The Word of God, the less likely they will be able to be “lured away and enticed” by sin. Because we have received a “new nature from above”, The Spirit and The Word changes us from the inside out. Yes, sometimes we still sin, but sin doesn’t dominate us as it did when we were lost. Christ has set us free! So how do we **Resist Temptation?** By **Receiving The Word** that has been implanted within us! This world is a cesspool of sin (**vs. 21**). But The Spirit and The Word has given us power to rise above it.

This is why we preach The Word in The Church, and this is why we encourage both private and small group studies of The Word in our daily lives, because The Word, when applied by The Spirit, will perfect us into what God wants for us. Or, as James would tell us, we need to “talk less” and listen more. We don’t have the wisdom or the strength necessary to overcome temptation, but those hearers and doers of The Word, they have all the power that they will ever need. We have God’s faithful and unchanging promise on that! Do you want to overcome sin? Then receive The Word. Then according to James:

**“— this person will be blessed in what he does.”**

I want that this morning. I want to live a life that brings honor and glory to God. I want to be able to resist temptation and receive The Word. I choose life. How about you?

And ALL of God’s people said... **TRUTH!!!**