

1. **Introduction:** Last lesson we ended with comments on 1:12 where James reiterates that believers are to stand fast in the faith no matter what the circumstances, but the truth is that not everyone tested by trials will remain steadfast.
 - Those who fail are often tempted to blame God for their failure. Israel had history of blaming God for their problems, the most famous example being blaming Him for their problems in the wilderness (Ex. 17:2,7).
2. **James 1:13-15:** *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”*
 - God uses the circumstances of trials to move us forward in faith, steadfastness, and maturity of character – but God never tempts us.
 - God, by His holy character, cannot be tempted by evil, or be a tempter Himself.
 - When external trials beset us, we often experience inner temptation to doubt God and stray from our commitment to Him.
 - Our own fallen nature is fertile ground for temptation to evil. Temptations can be prompted by both external (like trials) and internal (like imagination) factors.
 - Temptation is never an isolated act. Internally, it begins as an enticing thought or perhaps a pleasurable emotion related to some sin. If pursued in the mind or in the emotions increasing desire, a sinful action will be born.
 - Sinful action predisposes the mind to a repetition or expansion of the sin which will lead to habitual sin and degradation of character.
 - Unless there is an intervention to stop the process, progressive sin ultimately ends in spiritual death. We are not to be deceived. Temptation is a slippery slope that if given in to and not interrupted will lead to the depths of sin.
 - But God always provides a way out of temptations.
3. **1 Corinthians 10:13:** *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”*
 - Standing fast in faith, when tested by life’s storms, leads to steadfastness of character, Christian maturity, and the crown of life.
 - Suffering may come from either persevering during life’s trials or from yielding to temptation. The two must never be confused. Suffering that is a consequence of yielding to temptation has no beneficial effects unless God uses it to intervene.
 - Suffering that arises from persevering in the faith leads to life.
 - In stark contrast to evil things brought upon us by “wrong desire,” God gives good gifts.
 - Our spiritual birth into the family of God was no accident. God chose to bring us into His family through His word of truth.

4. **James 1:16-18:** *“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”*
- God is the Father of the heavenly lights. That is, He is the creator of the universe.
 - Unlike His creation, God does not change. All good and perfect gifts are from the Father. In His loving hands, even evil done to us is shaped to our ultimate benefit.
 - All of life’s trials are used by God to grow us spiritually – provided that we meet them in the light of God-given wisdom, standing fast in faith.
 - One of God’s good and perfect gifts is the wisdom mentioned in verse 5. God’s greatest gift is His gift of life eternal in Him.
 - His goodness is seen in that He chose us to give us new birth through the truth of the gospel. Our “new birth” was no accident, and God was under no compulsion.
 - As God created light in the beginning through His creative Word, so He creates new life in believers. From those to whom much is given, much is expected.
 - There is no gift greater than the gift of eternal life “in Christ.” New life is given with purpose – that we might be holy as He is holy and be transformed into a likeness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - Through this process, we are prepared to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
5. **Intellect, Emotions, and Will:** We have seen that a person’s will can override thoughts and emotions. The “will” is that faculty or aspect of mind that enables making voluntary choices.
6. **Wisdom** is emphasized by James who says we should ask God for the wisdom we need.
- Wisdom is the level of knowing that enables examining options, seeing the “big picture,” and discerning the godly choice that is best for the given situation.
 - Understanding is the ability to correctly interpret knowledge including the ability to distinguish right from wrong and fit facts into a coherent picture.
 - We add understanding to knowledge and wisdom to understanding as we mature in acquiring and using knowledge’.
7. **Emotions** enable us to experience feelings, moods, and attitudes.
- Moods are an inclination to have one kind of emotions. There are happy moods, sad moods, angry moods, etc. Moods incorporate emotions.
 - Attitudes involve a willful choice of mood and feelings. If I have an attitude of “I am not going to believe a word you say,” there can be no meaningful communication.
 - A “can do” attitude coupled with the right skills enables doing difficult tasks.
 - Emotions, moods, and attitudes form a hierarchy. Likewise, there is a hierarchy in using our power to make choices.
8. **The Will** makes deliberate choices based on knowledge, understanding, and/or wisdom.
- Knowledge enables single decisions – choosing between alternatives.
 - Understanding enables decisions that encompass multiple situations. We might call such “area” or “group” decisions “umbrella decisions.”

- Umbrella decisions deal with a related group of individual choices. This is especially useful for situations where similar decisions must be made repeatedly.
 - For example, many years ago, my wife and I realized that if we waited until Sunday morning to decide whether we would go to church and Sunday school, we often found a reason or emotions that justified not going that day.
 - To fix what we saw as a problem, we made the “umbrella decision” that we would go to church and Sunday school every Sunday unless illness or travel kept us away.
 - I made other umbrella decisions. (1.) To love, honor, and be faithful to my wife. (2.) To set a good example for my children (and now grandchildren and great grandchildren).
9. **Self-control** is the highest level of decision-making and involves our entire life.
- Self-control uses knowledge and understanding based choices, but self-control is organized and made possible by wisdom;
 - From a Christian perspective, self-control means making an umbrella decision to live life according to the principles given in God’s Word. It involves many details.
10. **Decision-making** involves will, intellect, and emotions which mutually interact. Each impacts the other two, but the will has the final say.
- In His Word, God gives “principles” showing how to discipline the various areas of our life.
 - James provides several life principles. Scriptural principle is a fundamental truth or proposition saying what is required to discipline some area of our life.
 - Wisdom is obedience to God’s principles and using them in all decision-making.
 - James says that knowing and understanding a principle is of value only if there is a corresponding “practice” or obedience that makes the principle real in our life.
 - The 10 Commandments are principles.
 - To be of value, the commandments must be obediently applied to life – obediently not stealing, not murdering, and so forth.
 - In John 14:15 Jesus says *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*
 - The principle to be observed is love for Jesus. The corresponding practice to make the principle real in your life is to obey the commandments of Jesus.
 - As far as I recall, there is no way given in Scripture to gauge our love for Christ except by our obedience to His commands.
 - Practice and principle interact. For a principle to be of functional value, the corresponding practice must be possible and carried out.
 - Associated with the “will,” we have choice, umbrella-decisions, and self-control.
 - With the “intellect,” we have knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.
 - With the “emotions,” we have feelings, moods, and attitudes.
 - As we continue the letter from James, think in terms of principles and practices.
 - The new life given by God is to be such that we are quick to hear and understand, slow to speak, and slow to anger. We are to put away all wickedness and be obedient to God’s Word.

11. **James 1:19-21:** *“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*
- When we are born again, our fallen nature remains in opposition to the things of God, producing conflicts between our NEW and OLD natures.
 - James gives instructions on how to speed growth from “new birth” to “mature new life.” We are to listen intently to the Word and then Live as the Word commands.
 - We should avoid anger and talking too much which hinder fruitful hearing of God’s Word.
 - If the SEED of the Word is to germinate and grow, ultimately bringing forth much fruit, the SOIL of the heart must be properly cleansed and prepared.
 - Therefore, be rid of all moral filth and evil making a place for the Word.
12. **James 1:22-25:** *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”*
- We tend to disobey the Word we hear becoming adept at devising good sounding reasons for not doing God’s Word just now – although we surely intend to be obedient soon.
 - In this we are like a person who sees their dirty face in a mirror, studies it carefully, but does nothing about it. Without the mirror image to remind us, our dirty face is soon forgotten.
 - Study of God’s Word and obediently following its commands is the route to obedience. Keeping the mirror of the Word before us is essential to obedience.
 - Scripture does not yield its wisdom and power to casual, hasty, off-and-on reading.
13. **James 1:26-27:** *“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”*
- The term “religious” refers to ceremonial public worship. The point is that going through the motions of public worship does not necessarily involve the heart.
 - A person is self-deceived if they think that following a rote recipe in public is true worship of our sovereign God who deals with us as individuals.
 - An unbridled (or uncontrolled) tongue will quickly reveal the pretense.
 - True religion is pure and undefiled before God the Father and demonstrated by actions like visiting *“orphans and widows in their affliction”* and keeping *“unstained from the world.”*
 - Pay careful attention to God’s Word and then live as the Word commands.
 - Using the wisdom that God freely gives (through Scripture and the Holy Spirit), believers should be distinguished by a controlled tongue, a caring love for the helpless, and a holy separation from worldly defilement.
 - The goal of God’s gift of spiritual rebirth and new life is our holiness.