

James 25-08-03b

We're ready now to pick up our study here in James chapter one. And what a wonderful parallel. If you haven't already done so, I would definitely mark the first Peter one passage that we've been looking at out in the margin next to this, because first Peter one verses three through nine or so is so helpful in providing another perspective.

It's like having your two eyes to really bring it into relief and three-dimensional reality to see the way that this works. The genuineness of our faith in first Peter one seven, more precious than gold that perishes is going to redound. It is going to be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom not having seen you love, though now you do not see him yet believing you rejoice with joy.

See again this idea that our faith brings the joy of the future into the present. It is a transcendent supernatural joy that overwhelms and makes manageable whatever difficulty we are facing. So this genuineness of our faith is revealed in the testing and it is found to praise, honor, and glory.

It is remembered. It is something that makes a difference. When the Lord Jesus returns and is revealed, there is praise, there is honor, and there is glory.

We can bring the joy right now. It may not be glorious. It may not seem particularly honorable or praise worthy in the present.

We can praise God. We can appreciate his grace, his faithfulness, his provision of strength and power to endure in testing, but the praise and the honor and the glory are going to take place at the revelation of Jesus Christ. We haven't seen him in the flesh, but we love him.

How do we love him? Because he is revealed to us by the word of truth and the spirit of God. And even though we don't see him, through faith we rejoice with joy. This is verse eight.

We rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the purpose, the goal, the end of our faith, salvation of our souls, the deliverance that he has talked about back in verse five, the keeping by the power of God for deliverance, which is ready to be revealed at the last day. We receive that. It is the purpose of our faith.

Why are we called to have faith? Why does God put so much emphasis on our faith? Because the goal, the fruit, the end of our faith is the deliverance of our souls. So you can go on in 1 Peter 1. He talks about the word of truth that was revealed. Those who carefully inquired into it and prophesied of the grace that would come to us, searching what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ who was in them indicated when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

That's verse 11. The sufferings and the glory which follows. This is the occasion for our joy.

Now back to James 1. Blessed is the man who endures temptation. Verse 13, let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. God cannot tempt by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone.

Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. This is one of the most practical pieces of truth that we can understand and apply. There is going to be temptation.

Remember Jesus said, in this world, ye shall have tribulation. You will have testing. You will have trouble.

Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. And the fruit of that victory is gonna be revealed in the last day.

But there is going to be challenge. There's going to be testing. So think of it this way.

There is an external component to testing. This is the circumstance. This is somebody says a thing.

Somebody does a thing. There is an external enticement. Satan throws something our way.

The world throws something our way. That's the external situation. There is an opportunity.

There is a potential. Think of someone who is tempted to stray from their marriage. Think of someone who sees something that can be stolen, something that can be taken without observation.

I've found this wad of cash that somebody dropped. I'll take it to myself. I can cheat on my taxes.

I can aggrandize myself. I can do something illicit, something immoral. This is the external circumstance.

It is an external potential. There is an internal component when this opportunity arises. Within us, that circumstance, that potential, that situation is going to be met by one of two things.

It is either going to hook into a selfish desire, an illicit desire to gratify ourselves, or it is going to encounter faith. What are we made of? When these things come into our observation and into our scope and become a possibility, is it met with faith or is it met with my desire? Think about Eve. When the serpent began describing the fruit and its potential and the wisdom that might come by eating it, that is the external situation.

In Eve's heart and soul, there is a desire, an illicit desire to not be subordinate, to not be the second human being and learn everything from Adam and follow his lead. Here's something I can initiate, I can bring about. And if she had had faith, if her thinking was soaked in truth, wisdom comes by request from God, even in those early days, then the answer would have

been no.

Think about the Lord Jesus when he met his temptations. Devil says, I see that you're hungry. Turn these stones into bread.

If there is a desire to feed that and satisfy that hunger in the Lord Jesus, the external factor is going to hook that self-centered desire. That's what it did in Eve. She saw that it was desirable to make her wise instead of the normal and proper channel of wisdom, which is from God through her husband, who is the head of the woman.

And she knew this. This has been a truth as old as the first couple. Here's an alternate avenue.

Here's a different way to become wise. You don't have to rely on God and your husband. Eat this fruit and you'll be wise.

You don't have to rely on God's provision, Lord Jesus. Satan says, turn these rocks into bread. You've got the power.

Get your bread in an unorthodox way. Gain kingship of the world by falling down and worshiping me instead of waiting for the fruition of God's plan and purpose and the future kingdom. You can have kingdom now and you avoid the cross.

All you have to do is bow down and say, you're the boss, Satan, and I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world. You can bypass the cross, bypass the suffering, bypass redemption, bypass the plan and will of the Father. And so that external situation, that potential is looking to hook a selfish desire, a self-gratification, a self-promotion, something centered in myself.

We make a choice at the point that we face such challenges. Is it about me or is it about God? Do I please myself or do I please God? When lust has conceived, when selfish desire conceives, it produces, it brings forth sin. Sin, when it matures, when it comes to completion, maturity brings forth death.

This has been characterized in other ways. This might be easier to remember. Mine are seduction, conception, production, and destruction.

You can simplify it and say, there is the root. This is when that opportunity hooks into a selfish spirit, a selfish point of view. That's the root.

It brings forth sin. That is the shoot. And when that shoot grows and blossoms and matures, it brings forth fruit.

So if you like alliteration, you've got the root, the shoot, and the fruit of selfish desire. We can harbor a selfish attitude, and as long as it isn't presented with opportunities, it can just sit there. We just commit mental sins.

But when an opportunity that is external hooks into it, it is going to produce sin, and that sin is

going to produce death. What happens, on the other hand, if there is an opportunity, but it is met by faith? In faith, we resist the devil, and he flees from us. Our faith is put to the test, and it endures.

Our faith is not displaced by selfishness. Our faith is not displaced by distraction or deception. How many times are we warned about deception? You can think of it, a pastor of my acquaintance, in talking about this passage, put it this way.

When you go bass fishing, there is a great big bass lurking down low in the water. He's got his little hole in the surface, under the water. So you don't just throw a bare hook in there.

You take bait. You take a gummy bait or a plastic worm, and what do you do? You disguise the hook and make it look attractive. You throw that in the water.

The bass has a desire for food, has a desire to eat that worm. So here is this worm that is jiggling in the water, and he comes out of the hole and bites it. If he wasn't hungry, if he didn't have that desire, you could dangle that all day long.

If he was already satisfied because he had had a good meal somewhere else, the bait's not gonna work. You're never gonna hook that fish. But when there is a craving and he's deceived, he doesn't look carefully to see, wait a minute, that doesn't look like a normal worm.

That's kind of a strange worm. He doesn't examine it closely and discover that there is a sharp wire hook in the midst of that worm. He does a quick impulse snap and bite, and the next thing you know, he's dinner.

So we consider carefully, is moving forward with this opportunity in this situation, is this gratifying me, or is this something that will please the Lord? How do I know? How can I discern? I go to God and ask for wisdom. Give me discernment. Lead me not into temptation, the Lord Jesus taught the disciples to pray.

Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil. Now, how and when is God going to answer that prayer? Lead me not into temptation.

Here comes the hook with the bait. Give me wisdom to see, to not be deceived. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to understand.

To know myself and know the difference between a godly impulse, a godly guidance, a godly path, something that is going to redound to the praise, honor, and glory of Christ at his revealing, or this appeals to me. This will satisfy me. I will get joy by being in the presence of God.

Saying this thing, performing this action, engaging in this activity, moving in this direction. I will find it satisfying. Do you think that Esau enjoyed the mess of pottage that Jacob had prepared when he bartered away his inheritance? I'm sure it was a wonderful and satisfying pot of stew,

but what he had to trade for that self-gratification and that temporary satisfaction was irrecoverable.

He could not get it back because he did not stop to consider. Here's the mess of pottage. What does it meet in Esau's soul? Is there faith? Is there orientation to the grace of God, the provision of God, the timing of God? Sometimes what is offered is legitimate, but it's not the right time.

People who are single and dating are quite often given the opportunity to engage in physical relationships. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with physical intimacy between a man and a woman when the timing and the circumstances are right. You're married.

It is a legitimate thing that provides momentary gratification, but can lead to endless seas of hardship and regret and sorrow when it is out of the context of that which brings praise and honor and glory to God. Paul says marriage is honorable in all, and the marriage bed is undefiled. But if people want to leap into that bed when they're not married, it is defiling.

Timing, circumstance, if we pause to reflect, if Eve, as she reached out for that fruit, said, wait a minute, is this something that is going to please the Father? Is this something that is going to honor my husband and my relationship to him, the God-given subordination? I was created out from Adam, not the other way around? Stop and consider this is the word of truth and the Spirit of God waiting, leaning forward to illuminate our path and show us this may be a legitimate thing, but not right now, not for me, not under these circumstances. We are so easily deceived. It can't be wrong if it feels so right, Debbie Boone famously saying.

It can't be wrong if it feels so right. And in the short term, it may even seem to have been a wonderful thing. But at the revelation of Jesus Christ, what will the judgment of God be? Remember the people we saw last time? Jesus said, many will come to me in that day and say, Lord, Lord, in your name, we did mighty works.

We cast out demons in your name. It seemed like a successful, profitable, fruitful endeavor in the moment. In the moment, God didn't speak.

In the moment when they did these works and invoked the name of the Lord, God didn't speak. There wasn't thunder from heaven. Lightning didn't come down and incinerate the participants.

When is the evaluation? At the return, just as Peter says. And what is the judgment at that point? I never knew you. This wasn't a part of the plan or purpose of the Father.

You didn't think about the praise, honor, and glory aspect. It gratified you, might've gratified people around you, but it did not have the end in view. And what happens? Pottage tastes good.

What a wonderful meal. Esau settles back on the cushions and pats his belly and says, wow, I don't know if I've ever had a better mess of pottage than that. Very satisfying.

Doesn't say he got sick and threw up. Doesn't say he got the green apple quick step. He enjoyed it.

What happens? This is the key. If you don't remember anything else from this passage, temptation, testing, trouble. When it comes, what does it meet in our soul? Is there a corresponding reaching out and grabbing hold of it by selfish desire, lust that conceives and brings forth sin? Or when it comes, does it hit faith? And faith says, this doesn't honor the Father.

This isn't obedience to the word of truth. This isn't something the Holy Spirit is enabling and empowering. And God's not going to be able to bless it.

It may gratify me in the moment, but I have my reward. That's all there is. And there is going to be rejection.

There's going to be flames of wood, hay and stubble at the judgment because this was not of God. It's going to have consequences. I may not see them now.

They may not be near, but whatever is not of faith is sin. Remember that? Whatever is not of faith is sin. Here's a situation where I can potentially be deceived, the worm on the hook.

If I bite, that's sin. Lust has conceived, brings forth sin. Sin is going to grow and produce death.

So that's the idea here. This is why this contrast between the testing that is met with faith, that's what James leads with in verse three. Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

That word fall into, by the way, is the same one. Remember the parable of the good Samaritan and the guy fell into, he fell among thieves and was beaten and robbed and left in the ditch. He didn't go out looking for it.

It overtook him and subdued him, fall into various trials. If it is the testing of faith, if you are a person of faith and if you react and decide and choose based on faith, that is a test that produces endurance, patience, and that patience is going to work within us to make us mature and lacking nothing. Perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

God works that test together for good because we love him. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, Jesus said in John. The one who loves me keeps my word.

I and my father come to him and make our home with him. If that same test is met with self-gratification, desire to please me first and foremost, it is going to conceive out of wedlock and it is going to bring forth sin every time. That's why he says, blessed is the man who endures temptation and is approved so that he receives the crown of life.

God does not look at us, see that we have self-centeredness and self-gratification as our response and then test us to bring about that sin. When we are tested and lured away and enticed by our own desire, that was not a test that God brought. That is a fallen, sinful, darkly

sourced testing.

When God sends us challenges, he sends them to people of faith who will meet them with faith and be blessed by it, be strengthened by it, be perfected and prepared by it. So we don't say, I am tempted by God. God does not tempt by evil or tempt others to evil.

So do not be deceived. Don't let the bait fool you about the hook. Verse 16, every good and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the father.

If something is going to be beneficial and productive and God glorifying, praise, honor and glory at the revelation, that is from the father. Anything else is not from the father. The good and perfect gifts come from the father.

If Eve had remembered this principle, would she have eaten the fruit that the serpent talked about? This isn't from the father. The father said, avoid this tree, don't eat from it. So this message that deceives her and induces her to eat hooks into a desire that wasn't displaced by faith.

He brought us forth by the word of truth. So then, verse 19, my brethren, let every man be swift to hear and slow to speak. Take our time, stop, don't be impulsive.

We can have a knee-jerk response, but we need to examine ourselves to see, are we people of faith? Are we in the faith? Or am I looking for a way to gratify some desire of my own that doesn't partake of praise, honor and glory? Wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, verse 21, lay aside filthiness and overflow of wickedness. This is what encourages and feeds selfishness, self-gratification, self-centeredness.

It's all about me, subjectivity, eyes on self. Lay aside, this is a choice. When a testing situation comes, what it meets in our soul is by our choosing.

If we choose to cultivate the truth and the presence of the spirit, it's gonna be met by faith. And faith is gonna fend it off, and we are going to be made more patient. We are gonna be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

If we do not lay aside filthiness and the overflow of wickedness and replace it with the implanted word, this is a choice. Do I reflect on the word? Had a Bible class last Sunday on Wednesday afternoon. Was I busy trying to get my own way, trying to make myself happy? Or did I stop and think, what was that thing in James? Am I gonna be blown about by every wind? Am I going to be carried about like a wave of the sea, unstable in all my ways? Or am I gonna be founded on the rock? Is my house gonna sit on sand and be blown away? Or is it on the rock? And whatever comes, my house is going to stand.

My faith is going to endure. I'm gonna be blessed, and God's glory is gonna be reflected at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Displace filthiness and wickedness, self-centeredness, self-gratification with the implanted word.

Let that seed sink into the soil and let it have a root and a shoot and a fruit. Remember the parable of the soils? Jesus talks about that. That that doesn't survive had no root.

It was too shallow. There is a root, there is the shoot, and there is the fruit, 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. We have to decide to be those people.

I don't have to really decide about whether or not to give in to a temptation. I have to decide whether or not to be a person who is temptable because I harbor selfish desires and I don't displace them with the implanted word. The decision is early.

It's too late if I've already got selfish desire in my heart and here comes the temptation. I'm already shot down. I'm done before it starts.

I have to be prepared ahead of time and cultivate faith in my soul, the implanted word, to think about it, to call it to mind. Look at these situations I'm in. I'm talking to people.

I'm doing a job. I'm performing tasks. I'm interacting with circumstances, people.

I'm having conversation. There's stuff coming into my mind over the web and over the TV. What is my response? Am I binging on this or indulging in that because I'm weak and it gratifies me or am I looking at each of these opportunities and saying, what is the response of faith? I'm a person of faith.

What does the implanted word in me say about this situation? That should be my response and I choose that ahead of time. Now the storm comes, the rain and the wind beat on my house and my house stands firm. Why? Because before the storm, I built my house on the rock.

This means get up in the morning, evening and morning and at noon, I will pray and cry aloud and I will ask God for wisdom. Lord, I want to be a person of faith today. I want my house settled on the rock today before anything comes.

Evening and morning and at noon, middle of the day, I stop. How am I doing here? Am I letting something shift my house over onto the sand or am I gauging every opportunity to think, to speak and to act by whether or not it reflects my faith? It is an expression and an application of the implanted word. Every single thing, don't be deceived.

Don't let something sneak up on you from behind. Oh, that potted sure smells good. Look at that fruit hanging on the tree.

It's beautiful to look upon and desirable to make one wise. Not when that's not the source of wisdom, not when your inheritance is on the line. Stop and think.

Let the implanted word displace those areas where I can be deceived and led astray by my own desires. How practical is this? Is this not where the rubber hits the road every hour of every day? This is how we do it. This is how the life of faith is lived.

This is how the power of God in the word and the spirit operates in the real world, right? Kept by the power of God with a view toward that salvation, there's going to be joy on that morning. There is going to be rejoicing at the return of the Lord and I'm pulling that joy in now. I am satisfied by what God is providing now and is going to reveal at the return of the Lord and I don't need what you're selling.

I don't need the worm on the hook. I don't need the fruit hanging on the tree. I can go to God and ask for wisdom.

I don't need to eat forbidden fruit to get it. Kept by the power of God for deliverance now and in the ages to come. This is what it's all about.

It is nowhere in the Bible more clear. This is why Solomon was blessed by God in first Kings. When God said, Solomon, you're the King, what shall I do for you? And what was Solomon's response? Lord, give me wisdom to accomplish what you have put me here to do.

God said, because you have asked for wisdom, I'm gonna give you that and all these other things are gonna be added unto you. You prayed the right prayer. You knew you needed wisdom above all to accomplish the purpose.

That should be us. We'll close here in a word of prayer. We'll pick up and move forward in James chapter one next Sunday.

Father, thank you for the clarity with which you provide guidance. You shine a light on our path. You give us plenty to be reminded of by the Holy Spirit, to be implemented by faith.

We pray that as circumstances challenge us that we will not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil by this knowledge, by your power, kept by your power for that day of deliverance when the Lord Jesus returns to take us to himself and present us before your throne. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.