

The Blame Game

(James 1:13-18)

11/11/15; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

I often struggle as a parent to figure out what to tell my children about my pasts.

On one one hand, I don't want to glorify my past sins and failures...

But on the other hand, I do want them to understand that their father is a sinner who needs a Savior...

And so some things I share with them as examples of what not to do, and some things I prefer not to share with them for various reasons..

However, there is an episode in 6th grade that I have often told them to remind them of the importance of keeping a clean conscience...

I am even hesitant to share this with y'all, but this example will help frame the text that we are going to look at in James tonight...

So, it was 6th grade and it was time for the annual class spelling bee.

Now at that point in my life, I was not a Christian.

My grandmother had taught me some verses of the Bible, but I never read my Bible or prayed and rarely went to church..

However, since 1st grade, I had always done well in the spelling bee...

Often, I was able to win my school's spelling bee and advance to the county level...

Well, the spelling bees ended in 6th grade, so this was the final year that I would be able to participate in the bee...

Well, it came down to me and another girl, who was always my arch rival in the spelling bee.

And then of all words that I could get, the teacher gave me the word CONSCIENCE.

And after, she said it, I immediately drew a blank.

I sat there for a while and then began...

C - O - N, but then I had no idea of what came next...

And I sat there for a while with only those 3 letters said...

As I looked around the room trying to clear my mind and begin again....

A girl, who really wasn't a friend of mine, causally pointed to her science book....

And it clicked in my mind...

C - O - N - SCIENCE

That is how the spell the word conscience...

I got that word right.

The girl later misspelled the word VACUUM, and I was able to win that spelling bee...

However, I had cheated to do it.

I had used that girl's help to win a spelling bee instead of relying upon my own ability to spell...

And I still remember doing that to this day...

I often use that fact to teach my girls how little sins can stay with your conscience for a long time...

And that you need to maintain a clean conscience by refusing to sin and doing the right thing...

Now when I got saved, that sin and thousands of others I committed were paid for at the cross...

But that sin I still remember, and that situation is also going to give us a good lead in to what we are going to look at tonight in the book of James.

Now in that situation in 6th grade, I wasn't a Christian, but let's let's say that I was a mature Christian and I was in that same situation..

The trial of that day was the fact that I didn't know how to spell a word...

That is the trial, and God put me in my life to teach me a lesson..

Maybe it was to remind me to stay humble, and realize that I am a fallen creature.

Maybe it was a lesson to remind me of the importance of hard work and study before a spelling bee.

Maybe it was a lesson on how to be a gracious loser...

But that was the trial on that day...

Now, the temptation on that day was different from the trial...

The temptation was the offer to cheat and be deceitful as a way of out the trial..

And the truth is that I fell to the temptation.

I took the bait and I fell into sin and the consequence of that sin was a wounded conscience that stayed with me for years...

So, a trial came to me, and the right response would have been to endure the trial, admit that I didn't how to spell the word, and resist the temptation to sin.

Then learn from that trial, be grateful that I was able to resist the temptation, and move on.

Now that situation is going to be very helpful to consider as we look at James 1:13-18 tonight...

IF you remember from last week, the book of James can be seen as a series of tests of what true faith look like.

In verses 1-12, we saw the test of trials that come into our lives as believers....

And we talked about the fact that trials come our way and should cause us joy to know that God is at work in our lives even it is painful..

And our attitude in trials should be shaped by the fact that God has brought this trial for our good and His glory...

And we also saw an added benefit of trials is that they reveal if our faith is genuine or fake...

Then we closed with a picture of a bullet proof vest and noted that a bullet proof vest can't be seen as real until it takes a few shots from a gun...

The same is true of our faith...

The bullets that come our way which we call trials are simply an opportunity to show that our faith is real and can be trusted...

Now, that is going to lead in to what we can call the second test of our faith in James 1:13-18, and it is this...

Does our faith have a right view of man and a right view of God?

I have entitled this message The Blame Game, and it really goes to the heart of how we view ourselves and how we view God in the midst of trials...

And our view of God in the midst of trials really reveals our faith...

It is often said that your true character isn't revealed until real trouble heads your way...

I would say this, your true spiritual condition isn't revealed until a true trial heads your way..

Because in that trial, everything that you you think about yourself and more importantly, everything that you think about God will rise to the surface.

And that is test that James is going to put us through tonight in verses 13-18 in chapter 1...

I have broken these verses in 2 sections...

I. Pointing the Finger of Blame in the Right Direction (13-16)

II. Pointing the Finger of Praise in the Right Direction (17-18)

Let's begin by reading these verses and then we will go back and increasing our understanding of them as well...

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted [n]by God"; for God cannot be tempted [o]by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when

sin [p]is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be [q]deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or [r]shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be [s]a kind of first fruits [t]among His creatures.

Let's look back at verse 13 to begin our time together tonight...

I. Pointing the Finger of Blame in the Right Direction (13-16)

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted [n]by God”; for God cannot be tempted [o]by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Now, this is where we need to see the connection between a trial of the verse 12 verses, and a temptation of verse 13...

In trials, which we can say come from God or from living in a fallen world, we often find temptation...

And that is what James is addressing in verse 13...

Let no one say when he is tempted...

And so, this trial has presented a temptation...

My trial of not knowing how to spell a word and facing shame for losing was accompanied by a temptation...

The temptation was to cheat in order to survive the trial...

The temptation was to take the help from my classmate and use it dishonestly...

Warren Wiersbe says this...

“ A temptation is an opportunity to accomplish a good thing in a bad way, out of the will of God.”

Let me give you some examples...

You have the trial of being diagnosed with a terminal illness...

The temptation is to see your life as over, so why not take your remaining time on earth and live it up in sinful ways...

You have the trial of losing a loved one...

The temptation is to see God as the One who took your loved one and to be angry with Him..

You have the trial of losing your job...

The temptation is try and make some money is a dishonest or sinful way...

A trial is an opportunity to grow closer in your walk with the Lord...

A temptation is an opportunity to walk farther away from the Lord.

Now in verse 13, James makes it very clear that temptations are not from the Lord.

And he offers the first reason in verse 13...

God cannot be tempted by evil and he tempts no one.

This is an incredible truth about God.

God cannot be tempted by evil.

He is holy and righteous in all his ways.

He is even unable to be tempted.

Some may say, "Well, what about Jesus? Wasn't he tempted?"

The Bible clearly says that he was tempted in all ways.

So, can't God be tempted??

I would answer that question in this way...

We see Jesus as the God-man...

Fully God and fully God..

And when it comes to the temptations that Jesus faced both from Satan and even in his daily life...

Those temptation came to his human nature, yet Jesus never gave into those temptations ever...

However, while his human nature was being tempted, his divine nature was never tempted in any way.

As God, Jesus could not be tempted, yet as a man, he was tempted in every way but remained sinless.

Now, getting back to verse 13, if God is not the source of our temptation, but who or what is?

And so James answers that in verses 14-15....

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin [p]is accomplished, it brings forth death.

And the short answer of who is the source of temptation is that **we** are the source of temptation in our lives...

According to verse 14, we are tempted when we are carried away and enticed by our own lust...

We often think of lust in relation to sexual sin, but lust is any desire that pulls us away from God to satisfy our flesh...

You can lust for control over things because you think you know how things should work in this world...

Yet, the truth is that God knows best and the control belongs to Him.

You can lust for money because you think that happiness is found there...

Yet, happiness comes from knowing and then serving the Lord with your life..

Our lusts lead us to temptation...

Let's go back to my spelling bee for a minute...

My lust was for recognition and to have people applaud me for being a good speller..

My lust was pride...

And that pride caused me to sin by cheating...

James talks about our how our lusts carry us away...

The original word there is *exelko*, which is the greek word for luring out a wild animal in order to kill him...

You ever seen hunting decoys...

Men will put fake ducks and turkeys and even deer in a field in order to draw out the real ducks, turkeys and deer...

And the object is to draw them out to kill them...

And then the other word we see here is enticed...

That original word was delezao, which is used of baiting a fishing hook...

That is how it was used in the Greek language...

So, here you have two words about how people are drawn into sin...

And the picture that is painted is one a hunter or a fisherman trying to fool a deer or a fish to come close to be caught...

That is a great picture for all of us of how sin works...

It is not the idea of "Oh, I just happened to be in the wrong place in the wrong time in regards to your sin."

Sin is the result of your own lusts and your own flesh laying a trap for you or dangling bait in front of you...

And that is what we need to realize about sin...

It always looks good and right, but it leads to death...

The fish that bites the hook ends up in the frying pan..

The deer that chases the decoy ends up dead in the field..

If it too good to be true, it usually is.

The biggest trap of sin is that it promises good things, but never delivers them..

Now, to get back to the point.

James is saying is that God isn't responsible for this temptation...

You are tempted by your own lusts and the sinfulness of your flesh...

Then he goes on to describe the process of how this happens in verse 15...

Lust gives birth to sin, and sin when it is accomplished brings forth death..

That is why you need to recognize that sin, like the birth of a child, starts in the heart and mind of a person...

Even in outbursts of sinful anger, the rage begins in the heart and mind even before it leaves a person's mouth or affects their outward appearance...

The idea that sin snuck up on you is foreign to the Bible...

Sin is going to come forward once temptation has given way to our lusts...

That is why your battle against sin is not an effort to control your actions....

It is an effort to control your mind and heart...

What is your instruction in Christian living?

Take every thought captive to Christ...

Every second of every day is an opportunity to move closer to sin or farther away from it in your mind and heart..

To control your sin as a believer, you are to fill your mind with the will of God, not your own will...

That is why a constant reading of God's word and a consistent prayer life is so important in the life of a believer...

If you don't fill your mind with the words of Scripture and by talking to the Lord, you will find other things to fill your mind with and it won't be good.

Because you are flesh and your lusts are real..

And they are constantly working to lure you away from the Lord.

You are your own worst enemy in every way possible..

And you must keep that as you go through life...

Now, let me say this for free...

Most people don't like to view themselves as bad...

They prefer to see themselves as good and everyone else as bad.

They don't like to think that their lives are filled with sinful desires, but the truth is that they are.

And this is James is giving this instruction here..

When a trial comes into your life, and then a temptation comes within that trial...

The reason you fall into sin is because you give in to the desires of your heart...

God had no part in that.

God has not set a trap for you.

Your lustful desires of power or money or pride or sexual immorality.

These are the things that lead you into sin.

Look, when that girl held up her book and showed me the word “science”, I only took the bait and cheated because I wanted to feed my pride.

I couldn’t blame her, and I certainly wouldn’t blame God for sending that temptation...

The reason for my sin is that I wanted to sin.

Pure and simple.

And James writes verses 13-15 to remind us that falling to temptation is our responsibility.

The world is not to be blamed for it.

The people are not to be blamed for it.

God is not to be blamed for it.

We are to be blamed for it.

And seeing ourselves as the problem is a sign of a mature faith.

A mature faith has a right view of man.

Think about it this way...

What do kids do when you ask them if they spilled a drink on the floor?

They find someone else to blame..

Their sisters, the dog, even you.

Remember Ada and Eve after their fall into sin...

God came to them in Genesis 3 after they disobeyed him, and let's read what they said...

8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." 11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Adam said it was Eve's fault.

Eve said it was the snake's fault..

And we see that the birth of sin also led to the birth of the blame game...

But a mature faith sees the truth about our sinful nature, and doesn't lay the blame on anyone but us...

That's why James reminds us in verse 16, "Don't be deceived about who to blame in your temptation."

That is why this is a test of true faith...

True faith knows that our biggest problem is our ourselves and our sin....

But there is another part of this test of true faith.

We need to know see ourselves accurately in temptation, but we also need to see God accurately as well..

Mature faith not only points the finger of blame in the right direction...

It also points the finger of praise in the right direction as well...

II. Pointing the Finger of Praise in the Right Direction (17-18)

When you get to verse 17, James shifts gears...

He moves from giving a right view of ourselves to giving us a right view of God.

17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or [r]shifting shadow.

The reader just learned that they are bad, so here is good news..

God is good.

In the context of the verses, this is a call to not give in to temptation considering how good God is to you...

Why would you listen to your own lusts and commit sin in light of God's goodness given to you?

Here is what commentator said...

"The goodness of God is a great barrier against yielding to temptation."

The old saying is “Don’t bite the hand that feed you.”

Yet, that is exactly what people do when they fall to temptation and sin against God.

Let me read you a passage in Deuteronomy that I think speaks to this truth..

As Israel was on the border of the Promised Land, Moses gave them a series of sermons to prepare them for the years ahead...

And in one of those sermons in Deut 10, he told Israel this...

10 “Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of [d]slavery. 13 You shall [e]fear only the Lord your God; and you shall [f]worship Him and swear by His name. 14 You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 15 for the Lord your God in the midst

of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will [g]wipe you off the face of the earth.

And the point is this...

When you get in the land and are faced with temptation to sin against God, what should you remember?

You should remember God's goodness to you to keep you from sin...

That is why James talks about God's goodness coming to us in the context of temptation...

When you turn your face to God's goodness, you turn your back to sin...

You know we use the phrase, "God is good all the time", and how do people respond to that statement?

All the time, God is good.

However, if you think about that phrase in light of what James is writing...

When you hear the phrase, "God is good all the time," a better response may be....

"All the time, I will keep myself from sin."

Someone said this..

“When we receive God’s blessings and yet continue to sin, that is like getting a heavenly paycheck and using to to pay the devil.”

Now, in terms of verse 17, everyone on earth falls under those blessings of God.

That is the idea of common grace...

Even the unbeliever gets good gifts from God, and that should be a reason for him to repent, trust Christ, and be saved.

But James takes it one step further in verse 18 and talks specifically to those who are saved and facing temptation...

Not only should God’s common goodness to you cause you to resist temptation, there should even be a greater barrier to sin in your life...

Because He has also saved you...

Look at what James writes...

18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be [s]a kind of first fruits [t]among His creatures.

This is a clear reference to salvation, where God uses His Word to save believers..

God is good to the whole world in general, but he is especially good to every believer...

Because He has saved them from their sin.

The word that James uses there when he says we were brought forth...

The word is apakueo...

And guess what that word was used for in the Greek?

It was the idea of giving birth...

God has given us birth by the word...

What does that remind you of?

John 3, when Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again..

James is telling all believers that not only has God been kind to you in many ways...

He has shown the greatest kindness to those who has been reborn in salvation.

And then he adds that the new birth makes us first fruits among his creatures...

And all that means is this...

As Christians, we are simply examples to the world of what God is going to do with this entire world...

The whole world is going to be reborn into a new heavens and earth..

And as people who have been reborn, we are simply a taste of what is to come of what is to come...

James describes believers as a kind of first fruit...

We aren't completely ripe, but we are getting there...

However, full ripeness won't happen until later...

In the context of what is happening here, the lesson is this...

Don't fall to temptation and sin because first of all, God is good to everyone on the planet...

He gives good and perfect gifts to all...

But second of all, believers shouldn't fall into temptation and sin because God is especially good to them.

We have been saved and forgiven and have the Holy Spirit and the promise of heaven...

But third, believers shouldn't fall into temptation and sin because we are examples of the new birth..

We aren't like the world..

We resist temptation.

We say no to sin because we are examples of how God changes lives through the gospel and salvation...

With that, James ends his argument of why you shouldn't give in to sin.

Bottom line, you shouldn't give in to sin if you have a right view of who God is..

If you see God as good in general, but also especially good to believers...

That should form a barrier to you being lured into sin by your own lusts...

Conclusion

Another test of genuine saving faith is how you view and respond to temptation.

The one sentence lesson of James 1:13-18 is that man is bad, but God is good...

To pass this test of your faith, you first need a correct view of yourself and realize that the source of temptation is inward...

But also to pass this test of faith, you need a correct view of God and resist sin because God is so good to you in so many ways...

Let me end with this picture...

What you see here is one of the worlds' largest hotel aquariums...

This is called the Aquadome and it is inside a Radisson hotel in Berlin, Germany.

It is over 7 stories high and contains over a million gallons of water...

And I give you this picture for one reason...

If you were to take a fishing bait and dangle it outside the aquarium...

Though you may attract some fish to it, there is no way they could bite the bait because the walls of the aquarium form a barrier to them being caught.

When we think of being lured by sin, we need to see ourselves inside the aquarium of God's goodness to us...

And there is no way we will take the bait of sin because God's goodness to us in everyday life and especially in salvation form this barrier around us...

That prevents us from taking the bait of sin and being caught...

Let us pray.

