

## **“THE SOURCE OF EVIL AND THE SOURCE OF GOOD.”**

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**Scripture Text: James 1:13-18**

### **Introduction.**

We live in confusing times morally and spiritually. We live in a world that is increasingly ambidextrous when it comes to good and evil. As the prophet Isaiah warned we live in a time when people are calling evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).

We live in a world where morality is decided by a vote of the majority, where if it feels good it must be good, if you succeed you must be right.

We live in a day when evil is not just common place but respectable. We no longer blush and are no longer shocked at every new immorality.

But God says woe to those who rationalize, those who excuse, those who wink and nod, those who look the other way, those who call evil good and good evil.

**Romans 12:9** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Have you ever considered that it is a sign of love and an act of love to know the difference between evil and good and to abhor the one and hold on to the other? This morning we want to spend some time thinking about evil and good and the source of evil and good.

### **James 1:13-16.**

There is a shift in James between 1:12 and 1:13, a shift from trials and tests to temptations.

#### ***What's the difference between trials and temptations?***

This raises the question what's the difference between trials and temptations.

Tests are from God who uses trials to test our faith and perfect our character.

Temptations are from Satan who uses them to lure us into sin and disobedience.

Trials work for us. Temptations work against us.

A trial is for our faith, a temptation is to sin.

Testings are generally external, from the outside; temptings are generally from the inside.

***What about when Jesus teaches us to pray to God saying, “Lead us not into temptation.”***

It doesn't mean, "God, please don't tempt us" but rather, "God, deliver us from falling victim to temptations that will overpower us and cause us to sin against you."

It's a prayer He answers with the Scriptural reminder:

**I Corinthians 10:12-13** Therefore *let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*  
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.

### ***Don't blame God.***

A holy and pure God cannot be the source of sin, evil, wickedness and temptations to such things. He is unchangeably holy and these things are inconsistent and incompatible with His nature.

We must never commit the blasphemy of accusing or blaming God for our temptation and sin. We must never even imagine that there is any sin or evil in God or that He would ever make us to be tempted to sin. This is a moral impossibility.

Nor can we cast all the blame on *Satan*. "The devil made me do it." It's true Satan is the Tempter and he is a great source of temptation but we can't shift the blame for our desires and sin onto him. We must look inward, and acknowledge our own guilt.

***So if God is removed as the source or cause (1:13), then what is the source or cause (1:14)?***

### **The great sinfulness of our hearts, verses 1:13-16.**

James gives us a very simple and clear chain of progression. Notice first of all he says this chain of progression is universal (each person) and it is absolutely inevitable (when not if). All of us do this. I do this, you do this. There is none who is righteous, not one, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and we continue to every day.

The chain begins with the ***deception***, the temptation. Temptations are deceptions, deceits, lies, things that promise one thing but never deliver, they are bait and switch. They can come from the world or from our own flesh or from the devil.

The deceptive temptation then appeals to a ***desire*** in us, it lures us like bait on a hook that catches us and drags us away. The purpose of temptation is to catch us, to appeal to some desire in our hearts.

If there were no evil desires in our hearts we wouldn't be tempted by the temptation. 2x

Sin has roots, it has a source, it sprouts and grows from something and that something is in our hearts. "Our destruction lies within ourselves" (Calvin, p. 269). I am my own worst enemy. G.K Chesterton answered exactly right when asked what's wrong with the world, "I am."

We are hurt or offended by someone and we are tempted to respond with anger or revenge. We are slandered and we want to return slander or gossip. Business pressures tempt us to do something that lacks integrity, or step on others to climb the ladder. Marriage pressures tempt us to infidelity. A family member or church member hurts us and we are tempted to never talk to them again. Difficulties in school tempt us to cheat. Greed or lust tempts us to find some security or pleasure in something monetary or momentary. Trials or suffering in life tempt us to doubt or deny God.

The urge to sin doesn't come from outside or from others or from God, it comes from within. If we feel driven to anger, lust, greed, pride, bitterness, hatred, impatience, it all comes from within our hearts.

Our sinful natures are different, one person is inclined to one sin, another to another sin.

Your personality, your temperament, your upbringing, your experiences can make you prone to particular sins. If you were raised in a home with an alcoholic you may face stronger struggles with self-control in that area. If you were raised in a home with pride, or greed, or moral impurity, or if you were exposed to that somewhere along the way in life, that may be a source of greater danger for you.

Why are these desires in us so strong? Because we all seek pleasure and profit, benefit and fulfillment. We have needs we want satisfied. Our lusts and desires make us think we can get from a finite thing what can only truly be found in the infinite.

Our lust and desires are constantly trying to squeeze one more drop of satisfaction from the rag of sexual immorality or money or selfish interests or flattery or food.

We all see it with money, just a little more. Or ambition, just a little more success. Or sexual lust, just a few more images, one more video.

Mark my words, when same sex marriage is legal and accepted in all fifty states don't for a minute think that will be the end of our sexual free fall. After that will come polygamy and legalized prostitution and lowering the age of consent and on and on. It is the law of diminishing returns, that elusive drive for satisfaction from something that promises it but never delivers.

It is true of all our sinful desires. Our lusts and desires make us blind to the truth, make us irrational to what is real, make us do stupid things. We *disobey* God and His Word, we sin. It's the stupidest thing we can do because it's the most self-destructive thing we can do, the wages of sin is *death*.

The first sin of *Eve* is a clear illustration of the path sin follows.

It began with a deception (did God really say) and grew to a desire (it was pleasing to the eye) and led to disobedience (took and ate) and finally death (just as God said).

The world, the flesh or the devil come with the match but we provide the wood.  
Satan has the hook, but we take it and swallow it.

We are without excuse and cannot cast the blame elsewhere. Our hearts betray us. Our hearts are the mother of all our sins, conceived in our desires, our hearts give birth to our sin. The most serious problems facing the human race are not out there, but in here.

The wages of sin is *death*. It will kill us unless we kill it first. Be killing sin or it will be killing you. we are either feeding it or starving it. There are only two ways to deal with sin, death or repentance.

Repentance is a kind of death, when we die to self and to pride and humble ourselves and kill the sin. But this death doesn't lead to the second death.

Brothers and sisters, our hearts are desperately wicked. We know it, our loved ones see it, God convicts us of it, let us repent before God and those we love. Repent, before our hearts get hard and God hands us over to our hardness and our sin.

Repent with sack cloth and ashes, with deep remorse, with tears. And don't just repent of your sins, but repent of your sinful desires. What good is it to repent of the fruit if not also of the root. In your garden if you only cut off the weed without pulling up the root it will come right back.

God's purpose in permitting Satan to tempt us is that for the believer temptation reveals the sin in our hearts. If there were no temptations to sin we would never know that there were sinful desires in our hearts. Only when our sin becomes known to us can we have the victory of forgiveness by confessing it, repenting of it and turning away from it.

It is God's grace when our sins and our sinful desires are exposed. Where there is sin, grace abounds to give us what we need to put them to death.

One earth Satan has no equal. We are powerless against him on our own. That's why Scripture repeatedly says to flee, to run away as fast as you can, because if you stick around you will lose. Flee to Jesus, to His crucified and risen body, to His power and victory over sin and Satan. In the death of Jesus we find refuge from the death our sin brings to us.

This is the glory of the Gospel, it breaks the power of sin, it enables us to take full responsibility for our sin and confess it and turn from it; it enables us to say no to temptation.

Satan's efforts are turned to defeat by the victory of Jesus given to us in repentance and forgiveness.

### **The great goodness of our God, verses 1:17-18.**

Since God is not the author or source of evil and sin, it follows that God is the source of good and life. It is in God's nature and character to do good. He is the Father of lights, meaning in Him there is no darkness, no shifting shadows, nothing dark or false.

God is infinitely good. He has never had more goodness or less goodness than He has now. He is always, eternally, good to us. The reason every gift from above is good is because of the perfect goodness of the giver.

God is unchangeably good. The sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes, but with God there is no variation or change. God is like the sun at high noon on June 21<sup>st</sup> all the time.

If God is good and if God is unchangeable then all God's actions are good and unchangeable. All God's ways with us are good and they are gift, they are grace. His spiritual blessings and gifts are the best.

So in all matters that come into our life, they should lead to thoughts of God's glory and grace and be cause for praise and worship. All doubts, fears, anxieties, distrust, should all be driven from our minds and hearts.

In the context of what we have already studied in James, this means that trials and suffering are part of God's goodness. God is not stingy, God is not mean, God's love is not conditional. Even the hardest things from God are never evil, but only good, in fact, only the best for us.

Notice the reversal of the progression. With sin the progression is desire which gives birth to sin which leads to death.

With God's good gifts the progression is God's desire or choice which works through the Word of Truth (not lies) which gives birth to a new creation which leads to life.

Verse 18 is the greatest example of God's goodness, God has given us new birth and eternal life.

According to the counsel of His own will and according to His own good pleasure God decided to give us new birth totally apart of any external influence, including our will or merit.

“The first barrier against temptation is a negative one: the judgment of God. This second barrier is positive: the goodness of God” (Wiersbe, p. 51).

## **Application and conclusion.**

How many of our are struggling with life right now, how many have major issues going on, how many of you are under a load of stress or guilt or sin or fear; anxiety about the future or tension at home, in some relationship? How many of you are feeling like God is not good, that God is not coming through? How many of you are in a trial and Satan is bombarding you with temptations to all kinds of sin in the trial?

How many of you have forgotten the inexpressibly great goodness of God to you and that even your trials and afflictions and circumstances can only be good, can only work for good for you and for your salvation and for your eternal life?

***First, we pray because the enemy is strong.*** Whenever God tests us for our good, Satan is right there trying to exploit the opportunity and cause us to fail. Adam was tested and Satan showed up to tempt. Jesus was tested and Satan showed up to tempt.

**I Peter 5:8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

***Second, we pray because we are weak.*** We pray to acknowledge our own weaknesses and vulnerability. We pray because the enemy is so strong ***and*** we pray because we are so weak.

We pray because the tests are hard and the temptations are strong. Sometimes we shrink back in fear. Some tests are so hard we flunk.

Remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. “Father, if it’s possible let this cup pass from me.” Facing the hardest test of His life, Jesus prayed. So must we pray, “Lord, protect us in severe and hard testing, especially where our faith might not survive.”

***Third, we pray because God is so good.*** Thanks be to God who loves us and is with us and gives us the victory in Christ Jesus.