

James 1:12-17

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Verse 12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” We don’t need to look at trials as curses, but rather blessings, and periods of proving. Jesus Himself said in Mat. 5:10-12, “BLESSED are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. BLESSED are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. REJOICE, and be EXCEEDING GLAD: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (emphasis mine, TCG).

Persecution (one of several types of temptations, or TRIALS, generally speaking) is a **guarantee** for those who are living faithfully (2 Tim. 3:12), so the presence or absence of persecution in our lives can be a good indicator of whether or not we are on the right track (although it is certainly not the ONLY indicator; also, the presence of persecution is not a guarantee of faithfulness). Thus, we need to rejoice to know that persecution likely indicates that we are doing something right! Not only that, but in the face of persecution, we have the joy of knowing that we can that much more look forward to our reward in heaven!

Trials also have a way of proving us. In other words, they make us stronger. See again James 1:3: “...The trying of your faith worketh patience.” Why? Because difficulties in life force us to seek the Lord for help, drawing us ever closer to Him in the process!

Verse 13: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” Temptations (whether in the form of trials or temptations to sin) do not come from God; they come from the Devil. The word “tempter” is used twice in the Bible (Mat. 4:3; 1 The. 3:5), both in obvious reference to Satan. While it may be the knee-jerk reaction for some to blame God for their troubles and various temptations to sin, this should never be the case. We need to be blaming two individuals: 1) Satan, the one doing the tempting, and 2) ourselves, the ones falling for his tempting. Does it make sense to blame God (as many often do) for all of the world's ills, or does it make more sense to blame the Devil, and also ourselves, because SIN is what brought those ills into the world?! And yet one of the first charges an atheist has against God is the question of why pain and suffering are in the world. Don’t blame God! Blame sin! Blame the devil! Blame OURSELVES for that!

Verse 14: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” The type of temptation under consideration here is enticement to sin. “Lust,” here, is another way of saying, “temptation.” Lust sometimes refers to sin itself — see 1 John 2:16 — but here, it evidently refers to the temptation leading up to sin, as seen in the progression from lust (temptation) to sin (see next verse). The temptation itself cannot be sin, for Jesus Himself was tempted (Matthew chapter 4), but never sinned (1 John 3:5). The word “lust,” then, is being used accommodatively here. Even though the temptation itself is not a sin, to continue to DWELL upon the temptation, PURSUING it in thought, is oftentimes referred to as “lust,” or “evil concupiscence” (“evil desires,” 1 The. 4:5), which IS in fact sin. This verse, then, helps us understand these two different connotations of the word, “lust.”

Verse 15: “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Again, notice, sin takes place AFTER the lust (TEMPTATION in this usage). Again, usually we use the term “lust” in reference to evil desires which ARE in fact sin. But James uses the term in THIS verse and the verse prior to mean “temptations.” Temptations, when dwelled upon long enough and then acted upon, produce sin. And what are the wages of sin? Death (Rom. 6:23).

Verse 16: “Do not err, my beloved brethren.” Quite frankly, to blame GOD for the temptations that come from SATAN is egregious ERROR, of which James is teaching us to avoid. It is ERROR to blame God for anything bad that happens in our lives. It is ERROR to blame Him for temptations to sin, as well. One common verse that is sometimes misunderstood, regarding this, is 1 Cor. 10:13: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Notice that passage says nothing about God being the One Who PUTS the temptations in our way. It simply says that God is the One Who has the power to make sure too much is not put on us ... **but He’s not the One putting those bad things upon us**, and will allow a way of escape. There’s a difference! And to not understand this is error. Again, may we never blame an all-good God for evil!

Verse 17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Not only does this reaffirm our understanding that only GOOD things come from God, but also notice that there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” in Him. In other words, God is not FICKLE. He does not change (Mal. 3:6)! Therefore, He can be trusted to provide for His faithful children, and He can be trusted to punish those who are unfaithful!