

"Attitude Toward Temptation" James 1:13-18

Well, Good morning... how are you guys doing this morning? Good? Alright... well, hey go ahead and grab your bibles and flip to James chapter 1... that's where we'll be this morning. As you're turning there, my name is Tim, one of the pastors here at the church. My wife and I actually moved to Austin to help start this church and have really enjoyed it, it's been a little crazy at times as we just had our first child in May. So we haven't seen a lot of Austin yet, but if any would like to babysit so we could get more acclimated to city... we would gladly take you up on it. :)

My wife and I actually met in college in a chemistry class... yes it makes for a great story, "chemistry". But, you know we didn't end up dating until about 2 years after we met. And the primary reason for that to be completely honest with you was... well it was me. We had opportunities to date, we were friends, we enjoyed one another, had similar interests... but, I never could get up the courage to ask her out. Now I know you're thinking, what?! Tim, I thought you would have been the total ladies man in college... well I know it's hard to believe, but for whatever reason with Jaya, I just had a **defeated attitude** when it came to asking her out.

Now, part of that was I had seen a couple of other guys ask her out and get completely shut down, so I knew I didn't want to be that guy. But, it got to the point where I would explain the situation to mutual friends of ours, I would tell them, "You know I really like Jaya... she is a great friend, she has high character, she likes sports, we have a lot in common, I think she's giving me a few signals" And they would tell me straight up, "Well, it sounds like you should ask to her dinner." And I would think about it and ponder their advice, but at the end of the day, just be like "Nah it's just too risky". I just had this defeated attitude. I assumed the worse.

Well, it all worked out eventually... as you can see and I think it's clear to all that I married up :)... but you know sometimes we can have this type of **defeated attitude** when it comes to our spiritual lives... specifically when it comes to temptation. We can expect the worse. Some of you guys have probably experienced this in your own lives. When you face a temptation, whether it's being tempted to worry, to be insecure, to gossip, to lust... whatever your specific struggle is... most likely you have experienced times of defeat... times when you just feel like you are destined to fail. Well, the passage that we are going to look at this morning in the book of James hits on our attitude toward temptation precisely. James is going to encourage us to face temptation with an attitude of victory, instead of defeat... And that's the one thing that I want you guys to see this morning, if there was one thing, one principle we could walk away with this morning from James, it's this... When we face temptation, our attitude should be one of victory, not defeat... So let's take a look at the passage... James 1, we'll start in verse 13.

13When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14**but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ----- So just so everyone is on the same page, this idea of being "tempted" in this context is to be tested, to be enticed to do something evil. Now the temptation itself is not evil, Jesus was tempted but did not sin... it's what temptation leads to that's evil. Now, notice what James doesn't say about temptation... he doesn't say "If you are tempted" or "You might be tempted"... no, he uses the word, "When". James recognized that all of us will be tempted... at some point, with something, with some vice... it will happen. So when we think about our attitude toward temptation it's not, "If by chance we face temptation, how can we have an attitude of victory, but rather it's "WHEN we face temptation our attitude should be one of victory, not defeat. And the first reason for that in James that we see, is this... that God is on our side. James makes it very clear that when we are tempted to do evil, it is not God doing the tempting.

Now I am a huge football fan, a huge Cowboys fan, which is pretty difficult right now because we are not doing so hot. But, without fail every time we lose or our team is not doing well, you start to see the players unravel. Players immediately start pointing fingers and assessing blame. (In our case lately, its usually Tony Romo who gets the blame, but thats another story) And you know, we can often treat temptation this way in our lives. When we are placed in tough situations or we just can't shake a struggle in our lives... we start to point fingers... and we usually start to blame God. "I mean, God why would you let me fail in this area of my life? Why would you put me in this situation?" And at the root of our blaming God is a deeper question. Now, maybe its not a question we'll ask out loud... maybe its not even a question we we'll write in our journal... but at our core, we are asking, "God, are you good? Do you want what is best for me? Do you have my best interest at heart? Are you on my side?" And thats what James is getting at in these two verses... He wants to squash any kind of thought that it is God who brings about temptation... any kind of thought that God is behind evil...

Throughout Scripture we see God's goodness... *Psalm 34 says this, Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Psalm 100 says the The Lord is Good, His love endures forever. In Matthew 7 Jesus says that if we know how to give gifts to each other as human beings, how much more will He, our Heavenly Father, our Creator give good gifts to those who ask.*

God is completely and utterly good and He is on our side. Now you might want to push back on this and say "well, Tim you don't know my situation, you don't know my struggle, you don't know my past... I think God may have been on my side at one point, but I'm pretty sure he left me hanging once I quit going to church a few years ago. I am pretty sure he hung me out to dry when I committed that sin or made that series of mistakes in my past... Tim, you just don't my situation" And you would be right, I don't know your situation, but Scripture says that Jesus knows...

Hebrews 4 says that Jesus knows your situation exactly... its says that Jesus was tempted in every way (not just one way, or not just in a unique way because he was the Son of God, but every way...), just as we are... And it says that he sympathizes with us... that He knows what we are going through and he understands. If we are going to face temptation with an attitude of victory, and not defeat, we have to get this down. We have to understand that God is on our side. And we have to realize that he's not out to trick us, he's not standing there in some robe scratching his beard waiting for us to fail. He wants what is best for you. He is on our side.

Alright lets keep going and look at verse 15... **15**Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Now, to understand this we have to go back to the first temptation... we have to go back to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. You guys know the story, there is one tree that God forbids them to eat from... well what happens? They are tempted by the serpent, they give it some thought and they end up taking a bite. This one small act of disobedience, this one small temptation that they give into brings sin into the world and therefore brings death into the world also. This is the cycle that James is describing and its why temptation is a big deal... but its also why the cross is a big deal.

2 Corinthians 5 says that Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us on the cross so that we might become the righteousness of God. This is what is known as the great exchange... that on the cross Jesus died in our place, for our sin, and that when we believe in Him and enter into a right relationship with Him, we are declared righteous in his sight. Through the cross God has paid the penalty for all our sin, shame, and guilt: past, present, and future... and freed us from its power. Romans 8 says there is no longer condemnation for those in Christ and that through Christ we have been set free from sin's power

over us. It says that we have the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead working within us. *doesn't mean we won't sin or struggle, but it means we're not buried in this cycle of temptation and sin that James warns us about. We can experience freedom in the cross. So as we face temptation with an attitude of victory, this is where we start, with the cross. We have to get out of our minds this idea that we can just white knuckle it, we can't just try harder, we can't just create a checklist... we won't get anywhere like that. We have to rest in the cross and in our position in Christ.

With that said, we can't be dumb about it. Now, I know this might be hard to believe, considering my slim and muscular physique, but I have a weakness for Dairy Queen... Not just the blizzard, which is spectacular, but even just the ice cream cones... they are so good. Now, along with my innate love for Dairy Queen is the fact that I drive by a Dairy Queen at least a few times a week on my way home. Now if I was on a diet, which I'm not, but if I was, it might be a good idea for me to take another route home. Most of us know what we are tempted with. We just do... we know where we are weak... whether its lust, greed, pride, envy.... James is warning us that these weak areas, that these temptations in our lives will ultimately lead to death if we give in to them. So lets be wise about it. Lets not play with matches right next to a gas leak. Lets be wise. Maybe its memorizing a verse, maybe its asking someone to hold us accountable, maybe its just running the other direction. However we attack temptation, we must start with the cross, because that is where our freedom lies.

Now, lets look at these last couple of verses... verse 16... **16**Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. **17**Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18**He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Notice that James says doesn't describe God as one who changes depending on his mood. He doesn't describe God as one who changes depending on how well he slept the night before. I had a friend in high school who was always changing. He really liked to keep people guessing. We were roommates our first year of college and I went home for the winter break only to come back and find out that my friend had dropped out of school and moved out. Just like that. And from then on, every time we would talk he would be living in a different city, have a different girlfriend, and have a new career goal. You know its kind of exciting having a friend like that, wondering where he'll end up next, what he'll be doing... I think we all have at least one friend like that... but it would be kind of scary if God was like that. Notice how James describes God... "the Father of Heavenly Lights who does not change like shifting shadows". You need to know that as we face temptation, our circumstances might change, our situation might change, our attitude might change... but God doesn't change. He is consistent, He is faithful, He is always there. *Psalm 121 says that God doesn't sleep or slumber.* He is not like us... he doesn't need a 20 minute power nap so he doesn't get cranky. If we want to face temptation with an attitude of victory, we have to cling to our God who is faithful, consistent. We have to cling to our God whose plan for us to know Him, to follow Him is clearly and consistently laid out in Scripture.

I would encourage you guys this week to face temptation differently... to face it with an attitude of victory and not defeat... to rest in God's promises that (1)He is on your side, (2)that there's freedom in the cross, and (3)that He does not change. And as you begin to see through that lens, that you would make some practical changes where you need to. And that most of all, that you would fall more in love with Jesus. Imagine what our lives would look like if we faced temptation with an attitude of victory... how would that change our relationship with our spouse, co-workers, neighbors... with God.