

Sermon Notes on Jas. 1:12-15, Lent I

1. Vss. 2-4 prepare us for vs. 12. Peter and John were joyful when they were allowed to suffer for Jesus. Acts 5:41. When Jesus was on the cross the joy of heaven lay before Him. Hebr. 12:2. God permits testing to come to His children for their good. Our text calls such a person blessed (makarios). This denotes the relationship of the believer and his Lord. Cf. Mt. 5:3-11. A blessed person is one who has been blessed with Christian faith which can stand up under severe trials. On endurance see Lk. 8:15 and Hebr. 10:36.
2. Job in the OT is our foremost example of standing up under trial. God permitted Satan to take away Job's property, family, friends, health and loyalty of wife. He proved to Satan that Job would endure. Job did not give up his faith in his Savior and eternal life. Job 19:25-27. Joseph endured the trial at the hands of his brothers and the Egyptians. But Jesus is our greatest example. God exposed Jesus to trial for our sake. He endured.
3. God exposes His children to trial to prove them. And when His children pass this test He gives them the crown of life or the crown which is life. II Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:10. A crown is a sign of royalty. Christians will reign with Christ forever. A crown is also the sign of a victorious athlete. After Paul fought the good fight, God gave him the crown. This crown did not save Paul. It was his reward. All the promises of the Gospel end in everlasting life. They tried and true love Jesus with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength, with all their mind. Mt. 22:37. They fear, love and trust Jesus above all else. Nothing separates them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.
4. Vs. 12 was devoted to trial and testing. Vss. 13-15 are devoted to temptation. No one should ever say that his temptations come from God. Man loves to blame God. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. Both were wrong. Let no one ever blame God for his temptations. Secondly, God cannot be tempted by evil because He has nothing to do with evil. God Himself tempts no one. But sinful man constantly blames God or His Providence for evils. That is sin, terrible sin. God is holy, righteous, just.
5. Each person is tempted only by his own lust, his sinful desires. They are described at I Jn. 2:16: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Sex, wealth and fame are three of the commonest sources of temptation. That sin is within us. Read Mt. 15:19: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Christians are included. Read about the works of the flesh at Gal. 5:19-21. Christians are included. Christians will have the flesh until they die. The flesh never gets better. Rom. 7:18 reads: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." Joseph resisted his flesh. Gen. 39:9. Judas and Peter fell victim to their flesh.
6. Vs. 14 tells us that a person is dragged and enticed by his flesh. This could be the language of fishing. The fisherman drags a line through the water which entices the fish. Or it could be the language of prostitution. A prostitute, using a man's flesh, drags and entices him. If he successfully resists as did Jesus (Mt. 4) or Joseph (Gen. 39) it ends here.
7. But all too often the lust, when it has conceived, gives birth. That is the picture of vs. 15. Conception takes place very quietly and innocently. But there will be results. When the sin is born and fully matured, it gives birth to death. Lust gives birth to sin. Sin gives birth to death. There is the chain: Lust, sin, death. Sinful man deceives himself into thinking that he can enjoy lust without paying the price. But he is mistaken. The Romans said: "Principiis obsta" which means "Resist the beginnings." Do like Joseph. Run! Do as St. Paul said: "Flee youthful lust; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." II Tim. 2:22. Oh Lord, protect me from myself!!

Theme: TESTINGS COME FROM GOD BUT TEMPTATIONS COME FROM OUR FLESH

Introduction: Our text speaks about two elements in the life of a Christian, testing and temptation. Testing is spoken of in vss. 2-4+12. Temptation is spoken about in vss. 13-15. Testing comes from God and is beneficial and, if endured, ends in eternal life. But temptation, if not resisted, ends in death, death in hell forever.

I-God tests us for our good, now and forever.

- A-This happens only to Christians. Vss. 2-4 and 12 speaks of testing. In vs. 2 James addresses them as "my brothers" in the faith. He speaks of the character of faith producing endurance, endurance producing the perfect work so that the Christians fall behind in no way as complete *and* genuine. And in vs. 12 he calls them "blessed" and those who earn the crown of life in heaven, which Jesus promises to those who love Him. The text is not speaking of just any and all troubles. It speaks only of the trials which come to Christians. A wonderful passage on this subject is found at Hebr. 12:4-11. Christians are like little children who need to be spanked now and again. For the moment the spanking does not feel good. But later the child realizes that it was for good.
- B-This happens only to people who have faith in Christ. Vs. 2 calls it the approved character of faith. It is not just lip-service. Satan told God that Job was faithful only for what God gave him. But God proved to Satan that Job really believed in his Redeemer. Job 19:26. His faith was genuine. When Christ predicted that Peter would deny Christ, He promised that Peter's faith would not fail. Lk. 22:32. If Christ had not sustained Peter's faith, Peter would have been lost. At I Pet. 5:8 Christ tells us to resist Satan steadfast in the faith. The most important thing is our faith. Faith brings forth endurance, the ability to stand up under adversity.
- C-What this faith produces. To those who truly love Jesus, who live in repentance over sin and faith in the promises of the Gospel, the Lord promises blessings for this life. Those blessings are recounted for us in vss. 3-4. It takes Christian endurance to produce good works. Lk. 8:15. At Hebr. 10:36 we are told: "You have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." And endurance also lasts into all eternity. Jesus says at Mt. 24:13 "He who endures to the end shall be saved." And our text says that the approved endurer will receive the crown of life which Jesus has promised to those who love Him.

II-Temptations to sin come only from our flesh

- A-Temptation cannot come from God. Ever since the fall of man people are trying to place the blame elsewhere. They are a picture of all people. People excuse their own sins and blame God. Or they say that since God created them this way, the fault lies with God. But our text plainly warns: "Let no one say when he is tempted 'I am tempted by God.'" God cannot be tempted by evil and therefore He cannot tempt anyone. Jesus was tempted because He became a man in our stead. As God He could not be tempted. As man, He could. The God-man, Jesus, was tempted in our stead.
- B-The fault lies within us. Vss. 14-15. Each of us is flesh born of the flesh. In this flesh dwells no good thing. If the flesh is not controlled, disaster results. His lust attracts and seduces him. When this lust has conceived it gives birth to sin. If this sin is not resisted, it brings forth death, death in hell. But we are blessed. We have Christian faith. Our Christian faith gives us the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Gal. 5:22-24. One of those fruits is self-control. We can be like Joseph (Gen. 39:9) who resisted lust and ran. The shield of faith quenches all the fiery arrows of the devil.

Conclusion: Testings come from God for our good. They lead to heaven. Temptations come from our own flesh and must be resisted by faith. Oh Lord, in your Word give us the true faith to resist temptations