**The Age of Deception**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**James 1:12-16**

**Wednesday Evening**

**March 24, 2021**

**James 1:12-16**

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

**12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

Saints, the Bible deepens the meaning of how God blesses the people to include a deep joy that comes from receiving God’s favor. As athletes persevere in training in order to improve their abilities and endurance for competition, so Christians persevere in spiritual training as they patiently endure testing that will bring maturity and completeness.

Today’s trials will seem like training when we face tomorrow’s challenges. The way to get into God’s winner’s circle is to love him and stay faithful even under pressure.

**Job 5:17-19**

17 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. 18 For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. 19 He shall deliver you in six troubles,

**Psalm 11:5-6**

5 The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. 6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals; Fire and brimstone and a burning wind Shall be the portion of their cup.

Saints, there is a finish line. There are successes along the way—spiritual progress has its mile markers. But the trials of this life are contained in this life. Someday the test will be over. The first chapter of James teaches us that God’s long-term goal for us is maturity and completeness, but his eternal goal for us is the crown of life, a rich expression of hope.

The believer who patiently endures by trusting God will have a life that, though not full of glory and honor, is still truly abundant, joyful, and victorious. Standing the tests of life gives believers even now a taste of eternity.

**2 Timothy 4:7-8**

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

**13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**

Saints, we must have a correct view of God in order to persevere during times of trial. Specifically, we need to understand God’s view of our temptations. Trials and temptations always present us with choices. God wants us to make good choices, not evil ones.

**Matthew 4:1-4**

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

**Matthew 4:7**

"Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' "

Saints, hardships can produce spiritual maturity and lead to eternal benefits if endured in faith. But tests can also be failed. We can give in to temptation. And when we fail, we often use all kinds of excuses and reasons for our actions. The most dangerous of these is to say, “God is tempting me.”

It is crucial for us to remember that God tests people for good; he does not tempt people for evil. Even during temptation we can see God’s sovereignty in permitting Satan to tempt us in order to refine our faith and help us grow in our dependence on Christ.

**14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.**

Saints, some believers thought that since God allowed trials, he must also be the source of temptation. These people could excuse their sin by saying that God was at fault. James corrects this. Temptations come from within, from the lure of our own evil desires. James highlights individual responsibility for sin. Desires can be either fed or starved.

If the desire itself is evil, we must deny its wish. It is up to us, with God’s help. If we encourage our desires, they will soon become actions. The blame for sin is ours alone. The kind of desire James is describing here is desire out of control. It is selfish and seductive.

**Jeremiah 17:9-10**

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

Saints, does James take Satan off the hook by placing responsibility for temptation on our desires? No, he does not. We may be led by our desires, but it is the Devil behind the impulse when we are going in an evil direction. Temptation comes from evil desires within us, not from God.

**Romans 7:18-21**

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

Saints, we can both build and bait our own trap. It begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on the thought and allow it to become an action. Like a snowball rolling downhill, sin grows more destructive the more we let it have its way. The best time to stop a temptation is before it is too great or moving too fast to control.

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

3 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

**2 Timothy 2:22**

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

**15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**

Saints, James traces the result of temptation when a person yields to it. Note that the first two steps in the process (evil desires lead to evil actions) emphasize the internal nature of sin. When we yield to temptation, our sin sets deadly events into motion—evil actions lead to death. There is more to stopping sin than just stopping sinning.

Damage has been done. Deciding to “sin no more” may take care of the future, but it does not heal the past. That healing must come through repentance and forgiveness. Sometimes restitution must be made. As serious as the remedy sounds, we can be deeply grateful that there is a remedy at all.

**Romans 6:15-23**

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

Saints, the first thing that Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives was this:

**Matthew 24:1-5**

1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

Saints, the danger behind James’s warning to us not to be misled is the temptation to believe that God does not care, or won’t help us, or may even be working against us. The picture is not pretty. If we come to believe we are alone, we have been misled. If we distrust God, we have been misled. And if we dare to accuse God of being the tempter, we have been thoroughly misled.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

**Jeremiah 17:7-8**

7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**