

It's great to be back with you again this afternoon, or this morning. No, this afternoon. The clocks have reached the top of the hour. And if you would, please turn with me in your copy of the Word of God to James chapter 1, or in your bulletin, where you'll find it conveniently located. And when you turn there, let me say a couple of quick words of personal privilege. I do want to apologize again for my accent. I know a number of our folk are struggling to understand me. When I first came to Mississippi, a kind person asked me, how long have you been speaking English for? It's very good. That is the truth, yes. There's the Queen's English, and there's Southern. And I'm working best and hard to move south. But it's not just my accent. Actually, when I was born, I was born with a fairly significant speech defect and spent a lot of my early years in speech therapy. And so that makes me, at times, difficult to understand, especially even for people in Northern Ireland. So I appreciate your patience. And I do try to speak slowly. The problem is, of course, when you're preaching, it's like golf. If you think about your golf swing too much when you're swinging the club, the results tend to be predictable and disastrous. And so you have to, if you focus too much on how you're saying what you're saying, then you tend to forget what you're trying to say. But there's a balance, because I could, you have to be able to understand me too. So I appreciate your patience and also time as well. I'm doing my best to be timely in my sermons. My congregation back in Greensboro are amazed because I was a 45, 50 minute preacher up there and they didn't think it was possible for me to preach under 30 minutes. It is indeed possible and it's good for me because I think I'm better when I, choose with more discretion what I say and what I leave unsaid. But for those of you here who work for a living, if you need to nip out early, it's quite fine, you'll not offend me, and please, you have to get back to work, I understand, if you have to leave before the end of the sermon. One of those things, though, when you preach, extemporaneously as I try to do. I have a bit of an outline normally, but when you're preaching and you get near the end of your sermon, you have to kind of land the plane. And if you were flying a 737 and a terrorist came onto the cockpit and said, land the plane now, you could say, well, we could land on a field, but we're not gonna survive. We've gotta get to the airport. And so there's that kind of delicate dance where you realize, oh, my time is getting, short, but you've got to get to the airport. So I appreciate your patience. And I am, in my defense, more concerned about getting you all safely to heaven than I am about getting you to Sunday school on time. But I do appreciate your patience. So with the word of God open, I'm actually gonna read a little bit more than you have printed. For that, I apologize, but it's a well-known passage. You can follow along and catch up again when we get down to verse 12. Let's pray and ask

God's blessing. Father, we thank you for your word. Your word really is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. And we just really need to get out of the way and let your word do its work in our lives. And I pray today, Father, that you would grant me clarity of utterance and expression, that the dear folk gathered here would be able to hear what I say, and that your word would penetrate each of our hearts, mine and theirs, and enable us to stand strong in the evil day. We offer these prayers in Jesus'

name. Amen. This is the word of God. Please take heed how you hear. Count it all joy, my brothers. when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and that steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He's a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. "'Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. "'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, "'coming down from the Father of lights, "'with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. "'Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth, "'that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.'" So this afternoon in our sermon,

I want to talk with you about dealing with temptation. when temptation enters us and when we enter into temptation. John Owen, in his, I think this

is in volume seven, I got it from my Logos library this afternoon, I'm sure it's in volume seven. He says, when we suffer, a temptation to enter us, then we enter into temptation. So the Puritans would speak about the devil tempting us like a thief trying to reach through a keyhole into the room. But they would say when we enter into temptation, we leave the door unlocked and ajar. We want him to enter, and

that's

a very dangerous time. Back to Owen. When we suffer a temptation to enter into us, then we enter into temptation. Whilst it knocks at the door,

we are at liberty. But when any temptation comes in and parleys with the heart, reasons with the mind, entices and allures the affections, be it a long or a short time, do it thus insensibly and imperceptibly, or do the soul take notice of it, we enter into temptations. Whether you know it or not, when you want to sin, James says, we enter into temptation, and we allow temptation to enter into us. And this afternoon in our sermon, I wanna talk with you about dealing with temptation. And there are a number of things.

And as I looked at this passage this morning afresh, I realized that really the whole passage from verse two down to verse 16 has to do with times of trial and testing. And the Greek words are very similar. Trial, testing, temptation. And there are a number of principles you've got to bear in mind, right? And there are four, God willing.

We'll try and get through them this morning. First of all, James wants you to see how you view trials and temptations matters. How you view trials and temptations

matters. I tell my children all the time, attitude determines altitude. Attitude matters, how you view your trials and temptations matters. And James says, you must count it all joy, not just some joy, but count it all joy when you enter into various trials. And the word various in the Greek is poiklos, from which we get the term poiklodot, dots of all different sizes. Okay? And so trials come in in big forms and small forms, pleasant forms and terrible forms. And we need to be careful that we count it all joy when we meet any kind of trial. And the reason, and there is a reason why we should be joyful, James says, is because God has a good purpose for allowing trials into our lives. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. Why?

For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Now God never sends trial or temptation into our lives to allow us to be tempted. He never sends trial or allows temptation into our life with the purpose that we fall ultimately into evil and sin. He always has a good plan even when He allows evil to come into our lives. And the purpose, James says, is to train you in steadfastness and to grow you up to full maturity. For you know that the testing

of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect. Don't short-circuit the trial

by becoming a grumbolina or an eeyore. When you do that, you short-circuit. It's like if you're a child learning the piano, and the teacher's making you do scales, you go, I hate scales, and you're doing your C major, and then your D flat major, and you're, I hate. You're not going to derive the

benefit of the training, right? You're not gonna put your heart in it, and you're not gonna grow as a pianist. Well, the same is true as a Christian. And James is saying, let Trials producing steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete. Mature is the word behind perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. As Franklin Delano Roosevelt famously said, a smooth sea never made a skillful sailor. And an easy life never made a mature Christian. Luther famously said there are three secrets to becoming a good theologian. Interns, listen carefully. Oratio, meditatio, and tentatio. Oratio, prayer. Meditatio, reading and thinking. And tentatio, temptation and trials, testing. And you need all three, Luther says, if you're to become a skilled theologian. And James goes on in verse five, if you can't get there, if you struggle to look at your trial from a joyful perspective, what do you need? You need wisdom. which is why James says next, if any man lacks wisdom, he's speaking in the context of joyful endurance of trial. He's not just speaking about a decision for, in business, say, for example. You can use this prayer for that is totally fine, or this verse, but the context is having the perspective of viewing trials from a godly perspective. If any of you lacks wisdom to do that, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He's a double-minded, a diplosokos in the Greek, a double-souled man, unstable in all his ways. Now our faith is always mixed with unbelief. And always take comfort, a weak faith brings a strong Christ. It's never the strength of your faith, it's always the strength of your Savior that makes the difference. What James is speaking about here is a double-minded, a double-souled man. A man who doesn't really know, he's in two minds. Does he want to grow as a Christian and become steadfast, or does he want an easy life? And he's being torn, and probably more willfully torn toward the latter than the former, and therefore he's unstable. He's the kind of person who views trials with an unbelieving heart that resists God's purpose, grumbles against his providence, and longs more for an easy lot than a holy life. The kind of person whose number one concern is getting to Sunday school on time rather than getting to heaven on time. So how you view your trials matters, number one. Number two, how you view your circumstances matters. Because if you go wrong on either of these two things, if you're being tried and tested and you become a grumbolina or an Eeyore, or you build your theology on your circumstances, you are leaving yourself wide open for sin to take the upper hand in your life. How you view your circumstances

matters. Look at verse nine. You can't, because it's not in your booklet, for which I apologize. Listen to verse nine. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation, Now this is an easy verse to understand, but it's also hard. James is clearly describing death here. The grass withers, the flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever, right? And so James is saying to the

poor man, glory in your humiliation, glory in the day that you die, in a sense. Why? Well, that's obvious. Because when the poor man dies, what happens? He's exchanging the appearance of poverty for the reality of the wealth he's always had, and now will fully enjoy forever. Then James says to the rich man, Let the rich man boast in his humiliation the day of his death. Well, that sounds, why should the rich man, why does he call death the day of his humiliation? Because he's losing only the appearance of wealth, all of the things that made him look so significant in this world. All his friends seeing him at the funeral and thinking he's lost the Range Rover and all those other things. And, But he's losing the appearance of wealth and he's exchanging it for the reality. And so both rich and poor should glory in an eternal perspective. when they exchange the appearance of poverty or the appearance of wealth for its reality in heaven. And that's important when it comes to battling sin because you'll never battle sin if you look down at your feet and what you have here now or what you don't have here now You need to have your eyes fixed upon heaven. Titus 2, 11 to 14, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. We live looking. for the glory. We live looking for the glory.

And so when we face trial, we need to keep our mind set on heaven. Or we'll think too much of ourselves if we're rich, and too much of what we have here and now, and we'll be deceived. Or we'll think too little of ourselves if we're poor, and both can be a danger. So how you view your trials matters. How you view your circumstances matter. Thirdly, how you view temptation matters. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life. Again, James is pointing us to eternity, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil. And he himself tempts no one, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his

own desire. Then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Now, when the Bible says do not be deceived, it's telling you most men are and you mustn't be. Don't be deceived about the nature of sin and the true enemy who stands against your souls. Who is the enemy? Who is the enemy? Well, James is gonna walk us through that, thank you. First of all, he says you gotta fight with the enemy clearly in view, and it's not God. God is never the active agent in temptation. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. Now it's interesting, That's obvious, right? God is neither the author nor the approver of sin. And yet, how do you kind of square this verse away with the Lord's Prayer, in which we pray, lead us not into temptation? Like, I mean, James says God never tempts us, and then Jesus says, pray, Father, never lead me into temptation. Well, how do you square that away? Well, if you look back in Matthew 4, verse one, if you don't have your Bible, that's fine, I shall read it to you. But in Matthew 4, verse one, we read a very interesting word, and the same word for lead us not into temptation is used, it's the same word for tempt in James 1, paradismos in the Greek, and it's used of lead us not into paradismos, temptation, and look at Matthew 4, verse one. What's it saying? Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Ah. Now, the tempter here is the devil, that's important. But the Holy Spirit led Jesus to be tempted, to be tested. And God's purpose in that, of course, was that Christ would stand where all of the children of Israel and every one of his people throughout time and eternity had failed, and Christ would stand the test in the wilderness. And Jesus says, you need to pray every day, Lord, don't do to me what you did to your son. If you lead me into temptation, I am in trouble. Right? Okay, so how do you square away God leading Jesus into temptation and us praying, Father, please don't do that to me, with James? And the answer, I think, is simple. God is never the active agent in temptation, we've said that. And when he allows temptation to come into our lives, his purpose is never your ultimate downfall. There's times like with Hezekiah, God removes his hand from Hezekiah to test his heart. I'll never forget Dr. Davis in seminary, he was teaching. I took every elective that Dr. Thomas had and Dr. Davis gave at RTS. Made me busy but it was wonderful. And Dr. Davis was teaching and preaching the Old Testament and he quoted Hezekiah, that passage in Chronicles about Hezekiah. The Lord took his hand away from Hezekiah to test his heart. And he said, now boys, why is that in the Bible? And we're going, oh. He says,

it's there in the Bible so that you will pray, Lord, don't you ever take your hand off me. If you take your hand off me, you already know what's in my heart. And if you take your hand off me, I will fall flat on my face. Like one of our associate pastors running around the famous ball field. Sorry, David, I couldn't resist it. And so, but even with Hezekiah, God took his hand off Hezekiah to test his heart, to humble Hezekiah, and ultimately to deal, to prune away evil in our heart. And sometimes God will allow temptation to come into your life. And sometimes he'll even allow you to fall into sin to humble you and teach you how much you need his grace. I need thee every hour. But his ultimate goal is not evil. His ultimate goal is not that you would sin. His ultimate goal is that you become stronger. Like Peter, when Peter said to Jesus, Peter, Satan has asked for you that he might sift you as wheat. And Peter said, and you said, no, right? And he said, no, but I did pray for you that when you return to me, you will strengthen your brethren. And so God is not the enemy. Actually, the devil isn't even the enemy here. The devil isn't even mentioned in this passage, which is interesting. There's a famous story about the wee boy who kicked his sister in the shin, poked her in the eye, and pulled her hair. And his mother came out to him and said, this is not autobiographical, but his mother came out to him and said, don't you dare tell me the devil made you do it. And the wee boy said, well mom, if I'm honest, the devil might have made me kick her in the shin and poke her in the eye, but pulling her hair, that was my idea. And we often blame the devil for our sins, and it's important to do that. Like when you're listening to a sermon, for example, and a little voice whispers in your ear, Dr. Stewart doesn't understand your pain. He doesn't understand how hard it is for you in your moment. That voice might not be your voice. It could be the devil speaking in your ear, right? But if the devil was banished tomorrow, If the pre-millennialists were right, and I do believe they are, and the devil in some future reality was banished to a pit, I think he's banished actually there now to an extent metaphorically, in comparison to the Old Testament, but nonetheless, let's say that happened and the world became, the gospel goes viral and the world turns to Christ for a thousand years. That still wouldn't fix our sin problem. You and I are still capable of sinning all by ourselves, and it would be shocking how much sin would still come forth from my mind and yours without the devil's infernal help. So who is the enemy? The enemy is the person looking me back in the mirror in the morning when I shave. I have met the enemy, and it is us. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. And those words, lured, is actually a very violent word. It's more being dragged

off by your desire. And enticed is being deceived. And your lusts, your desires can be very strong. They can drag you and they can also entice you. They will whisper lies in your ears. But why you should hate Jemima and not forgive her when she apologized to you? Why you should be coveting your neighbor's new car? Why you should be lusting after this, that, and the other, right? Those desires can overwhelm us and they also deceive us. They whisper in our ears lies. And James is saying you must

be very, very clear in your mind what the game plan of lust and desire is. It's never to help you. It's never to bless you. It's never to satisfy you. It's always to destroy you. When desire has conceived, verse

15, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. A number of years ago, there was a story in the European newspapers about Knut. Knut was this cuddly little polar bear. He was like 10 pounds, and he was just cute, right? And the German authorities were going to euthanize him. They were going to put him down, right? And there was an outcry all across Europe. And Canute was spared, this cuddly little polar bear. Well, a number of years later, there was another headline about Canute, and it was Canute the Psychopath. And there was this little schoolgirl standing in front of this plexiglass enclosure at the polar bear in, I don't know, Copenhagen. museum, zoo, and she's standing at the plexiglass, and Knut is like, and he is just throwing this 600 pound weight against the plexiglass. And this little girl is like horrified, this bear, all teeth and claws, is kind of spread out over the face of the plexiglass. And praise God, like 10 inch thick plexiglass. But, you know, I read that and thought to myself, how did you go from Knut the cuddly to Knut the psychopath? They fed him little fish every

day. And James says to you, when you give in to your sinful desires, a little sin is born in your heart. And when you feed that sin, it will grow. And once it is full grown, it will kill you. Do not be deceived. About that James is saying. Like the story told by the old

Indian chief to his grandson about in your soul there are two wolves, a white one and a black one. The white one is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, and self-control, and the black one is envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness, adultery, and all those other vices. And they're fighting, and the wee boy says, which one's gonna win, Papa? And the father says, the one you feed. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Where are you making provision for the flesh? And you probably don't have to think too long to get there. Where are you making provision for the flesh? Where are you feeding the black dog? If you live after the flesh, you will die. John Murray says, here is inevitable and invariable



sequence. A sequence which God himself does not and cannot violate. The doctrine of the security of the believer does not obviate, remove this sequence. The only way of avoiding the issue of death is to be delivered and desist from the life of the flesh. Do not be deceived. So you've got to view your circumstances correctly, you've got to view your trials correctly, you've got to view your temptations correctly, and the real problem is not the devil, and it's certainly not God, it is our own hearts. And lastly, and very briefly, let me just read the point really, how you view God matters. Every good gift and every perfect

gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. The shadow of God's goodness, the shadows of God's goodness never lengthen. It's always noonday, giving one good gift after another. It's a beautiful picture. Of his own will, he brought us forth. That's the same word back in 15. Sin brings forth death. God brings forth different fruit.

Of his own will, he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be kind, a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Here's another fruitful force, James is saying. If desire brings forth sin and sin brings forth death, it's very fruitful. Here's another fruitful force. It's the fruit of God, his will, and his word. No time to go there now. We'll

maybe look at it in John 3, sermon down the line. Of his own will he begat us, caused us to be born again by the word of truth. Are you here this morning and

maybe you're wondering, have you ever been born again? Read the Bible. The Bible is God's jumper lead,

like the black and the red one you put on your battery. The Bible is God's jumper lead to bring life to a dead soul. Expose yourself to as much of the Bible as you can. That's how God births Christians. And Christian, it's also the way God grows Christians. You've got to be in the word.

It encourages my soul so much to see so many of you here on Wednesdays listening to the word of God. You're not wasting your time. You might only understand 10%

of what I say. Pray that I get the gift of tongues

and you get the gift of interpretation. But what you hear It's God's means, God's primary, ordinary means for giving people his extraordinary grace and growing us up. It's by the word of God. And

so it's no accident, we'll be there in a few weeks time, when Jesus meets the devil, with what does Jesus answer the devil? With scripture. It is written. It is written. That's always,

if the son of God won't dare deal with temptation without the Bible in his mouth, then might I suggest that neither you nor I should try to resist temptation any other way. It makes all the difference in the world. Like when you're planking in the gym, I see some of you in the gym at the YMCA doing your planks, which is really good for your core, and you're

kind of there holding on, bounce the shoulders at times a little bit, you're holding on, and you're just gritting and bearing it, right? That's not the main way we conquer sin. We conquer sin, first of all, in our minds, and we conquer sin in our minds by filling our minds with scripture. There's power in God's word. That's why he made the world with words, when thoughts would have done. Because when you're dealing with the word of God, you're dealing with the most powerful force imaginable. When he speaks, nothing remains the same, and everything changes in your life and mine. Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your Son, who's the living word, who died to forgive us our sins, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and who you sent the Holy Spirit to empower the spoken word of God and the preached word of God to beget and bring forth God's sons and daughters in this world. And I thank you for the men and women here. I see life in their eyes and in their souls. And we pray, I pray for myself and I pray for them. Lord, do not lead us into temptation. We wouldn't stand a second if you took your hand off us. There's no limit to how far, how fast we'd fall. Keep us kept, Father, and surround us with your loving kindness, and fill us with your word and your spirit, that when Satan wants us to say yes, we will say no. It is written. And we offer these prayers in Jesus' name, amen.