

The Author of James

There are numerous men by the name of James mentioned in the NT.

There has been some dispute about which James wrote this letter, but most agree it was the Lord's brother. Some notable men like John Calvin thought it was James the son of Alphaeus (one of the 12 apostles). He is the only other James that would have written, but his early death seems to rule him out.

The Ministry of James

James, the Lord's brother, is the one who became very prominent in the early church in Jerusalem.

If you remember the chronology of Acts, you know that a severe persecution broke out after Stephen's death.

This caused many early Jewish Christians to be scattered out of Jerusalem (into Judea, Samaria...)

Many of these fleeing Jewish Christians were members of James' church in Jerusalem.

According to Verse 1, he's writing to these church members who have been "**scattered abroad.**"

Believers Under Trial

Not only did these believers experience the trial of being dispersed from their home, there were ongoing...

Even after they fled Jerusalem, they were clearly still facing persecution, trial, and unique temptations.

Like Peter's epistle (also written to scattered believers) there are a lot of instructions in James on handling...

TOs in AM

Fifteen years of my career were spent in Aircraft Maintenance. As such, we followed "Technical Orders."

TOs gave step-by-step instructions on how to perform every task required to maintain the aircraft.

Embedded in those instructions were NOTES, CAUTIONS, and WARNINGS.

NOTES - An operation, procedure, or condition that was essential to highlight.

CAUTION - An operation, procedure, or condition that if not observed, would cause damage to the aircraft.

WARNING - An ... that if not observed, would likely result in personal injury or loss of life.

CIT - James is giving encouragement and instructions to these scattered believers regarding how they should handle Trial and Temptation.

SI - Trial and Temptation are a fact of life...and they are even more of a fact of life for the Christian.

If you and I are to handle Trial/Temptation effectively, then we need inspired instruction to do so.

We need "Technical Orders" that will give us guidance and mark of boundaries as we deal with T/T.

TRANS - James provides that for us here. Just as a maintainer's TO gives him Notes, Cautions, and Warnings, **JAMES 1:12-15** gives the believer a Note, Caution, and a Warning.

With regard to T/T... **NOTE**: It's Good to Persevere (v. 12) / **CAUTION**: It's Bad to Blame God (v. 13) /

WARNING: It's Worse to Give In (v. 14-15)

* "Do not be deceived..."

1. **NOTE**: It's Good to Persevere (v. 12)

The "Blessing" / "Benediction"

Verse 12 begins with a "**blessing**"/"**benediction**" (a pronouncement of blessing) - "**Blessed is the man...**"

As you go through Scripture, there are numerous benedictions like this one. Particularly in the **PSALMS**:

PSA 1:1 - "**Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand...**"

PSA 32:1 - "**Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not input iniquity.**"

PSA 34:8 - "**Blessed is the man who takes refuge in the Lord.**"

PSA 40:4 - "**Blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust.**"

PSA 65:4 - "**Blessed is the man whom you choose and bring near to you to dwell in your courts.**"

PSA 84:5 - "**Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.**"

PSA 146:5 - "**Blessed is the man whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.**"

You find similar blessings in the **Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.**

In the NT, you Jesus pronounce similar blessings (we're most familiar with the **Beatitudes**).

“Blessed” for “Persevering”

All of the benedictions given in the Bible relate to some aspect of a person’s life.

James’ benediction is with regard to one’s willingness/ability/determination to “**persevere under trial.**”

“**Persevere**” is a compound made of two different words: “**Under**”/“**Beneath**” & “**Stay**”/“**Remain.**”

The idea is that you have the fortitude, patience, resoluteness to stick it out, to bear up under bravely/calmly.

“Perseveres” - P/A/I

The verb “**Perseveres**” is a **Present/Active/Indicative**. It’s ongoing, continual.

The person who perseveres stays, continues through to the end. They don’t try to flee, escape, or avoid.

The person marked by perseverance has a unique ability to stick it out, to remain unshaken/unbroken.

The word “**persevere**” implies that you are resisting/fighting/enduring something...

Enduring What???

Q: What is it they’re enduring? **A:** “**Trial**” / “**Temptation**” / “**Testing**”

This is the word Jesus used in **MATT 6:13** as part of “**The Lord’s Prayer**” - “**...and do not lead us...**”

MATT 26:41 - “**Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation.**”

Verb form: **MATT 4:1** - “**Jesus was led up by the S. into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.**”

1COR 10:13 - “**No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful...**”

Shades of “Temptation”

When we hear the word “**temptation,**” we tend to automatically think of being tempted to commit sin.

That same word can also describe being tested/examined, undergoing adversity, or being led astray.

The majority of the time, it does refer to those circumstances where someone is tempted by evil to sin.

James will use this same word a few more times in our passage to describe temptation to sin.

But here in **Verse 12**, James seems to be using it in the sense of undergoing adversity/trial/testing of faith.

Defining “Trial”

The “**trial**” James is talking about in **Verse 12** is the same “**trial**” he refers to back in **Verses 2-4 (READ)**.

He’s describing a person who encounters “**various trials**” that “**test their faith**” and “**perseveres.**”

He’s describing the genuine believer, whose faith is real and unable to be broken when put to the test.

So, “**trial**” here is a circumstance (internal/external) that comes into a believer’s life and tests their faith.

It’s that event, difficulty, problem, struggle, adversity, distress, that hard time that we inevitably face.

This now helps us understand what James means by the next key word in the passage: “**approved.**”

Defining “Approved”

If James were describing temptation to sin, the word “**approved**” would describe someone who’s resisted.

Because James is describing perseverance through trial, “**approved**” describes the person who’s faith passes.

The one who “**has been approved**” has undergone the trial/test and their faith didn’t give way/it didn’t fail.

The trial/testing did not end up revealing their faith to be artificial/fake. They didn’t abandon their faith.

You “Passed”?

Not only did they “**pass the test,**” but the trial served its purpose: it “**produced endurance**” (**READ 1:3-4**).

They were not like the seed on rocky soil that fell away when affliction/persecution arose (**MATT 13:20-21**).

Put simply, the word “**approved**” ties directly into what he just said: he’s “**persevered**” - he’s “**remained.**”

Back to the Benediction (v. 12b)

In the second half of the verse, we return to the benediction. Right after James pronounces it, he says, “**For.**”

The second half of the verse is really the reason WHY the one who perseveres is “**blessed.**”

They are “**blessed**” because they will “**receive the crown of life.**”

This is the promise blessing for those who persevere through trial, having a faith tested and proven genuine.

Defining “Crown”

There are several “**crowns**” mentioned in the NT: “**glory,**” “**righteousness,**” “**exultation**” ... “**life.**” Since glory, righteousness, exultation, and life are immaterial, I think it’s best to take the crown that way. I don’t think believers will be given a literal crown that has “**LIFE**” inscribed on it. Rather, I agree with many commentators who believe that the crown is the “**life**” itself. In other words, the “**crown**” we receive is “**life,**” “**righteousness,**” “**glory,**” etc. Metaphorically speaking, when Christ returns, He will crown all those who have persevered with eternal life.

Who Receives the Crown?

Notice that the crown is not for only a select few “**super elite**” Christians. It’s “**promised to those who love Him.**” It’s promised to those who have genuine faith in/love for Christ. **2 TIM 4:7-8 - “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”** If you are a Christian, take courage. No trial will take away your faith. You will receive the crown of life!

GOSPEL

If you’re not a Christian, you need to beware. You may be like that seed that fell on the rocky soil. It sprouted. It grew up. It looked genuine. But it didn’t last. The faith was not genuine/firmly rooted. You may have received the word (even w/joy). If you’re not real, trial/affliction will reveal your true nature. Let me encourage you: stop pretending! You can only fake faith for so long. The fire of trial will test you. Rather, turn from your hypocrisy and genuinely trust in Christ. That’s the only way you’ll persevere.

Believer...

Is your life one marked by perseverance? You may be going through one of these trials right now. Are you enduring? Are you persevering? Are you “**counting it all joy**” that a trial has come to test your faith? Your trial may be internal. It may be external. It may be financial. It may be physical. It may be spiritual. Continue as Paul said, “**Fighting the good fight.**” And let me reassure you: you WILL persevere. There is the crown of life awaiting all of us who love the Lord. All trials will soon be over.

TRANSITION

Here is the NOTE from James: It’s Good to Persevere. It’s good in more ways than one. So keep persevering! “**But let me caution you,**” James says in the next verse. Your trial might take a turn and become temptation. The **CAUTION** is about getting to the point in your trial where you’re tempted to blame God. Put simply...

2. **CAUTION:** It’s Bad to Blame God (v. 13)

The Dynamic Nature of Trial/Temptation

The nature of trial/temptation is very dynamic and fluid. Trials ebb/flow & the severity of trials ebbs/flows. What begins as a trial/testing of faith/endurance can quickly become an occasion for solicitation to sin. This is why James immediately follows up what he just said with instructions on avoiding sin. Before he gives us instructions on the nature of sin and temptation, he cautions us about blaming God.

James Switches Gears

In **Verse 13**, James switches gears. In switching gears, he seems to change his usage of “**trial**”/“**temptation**”. He moves from discussing “**trials that test our faith**” in **V. 2-12** to “**temptations to sin**” in **V. 13-14**. Because James deals with them so seamlessly, it shows again how quickly one can lead to the other. If you’re going through a trial right now, be on guard because that trial can morph into temptation. Anytime your faith is tested, at any moment it can become a circumstance where you’re tempted to sin.

Trials From God Vs. Temptation To Sin

Listen carefully: Trial and circumstances that test our faith do come from God. Temptation to sin does not. God allows (sometimes sends) trials into our lives to test our faith; to test and reveal our hearts.

He does this because of the many benefits of trials: pray, humble, dependent, endurance, character, hope. God may send a trial into your life to test/refine your faith, but His intention is never to try to get you to sin.

Not Persevering Well

Q: When God sends those trials, we don't always persevere under them the way He desires us to do we? We can begin to grumble/complain, become discontent, gossip, get angry, we allow our flesh to control us. Guess what else we can begin to do: cast blame...people, circumstances/"luck", and we can even blame God! Now, there are many things we can do wrong in a trial, especially if it begins to turn into a temptation to sin. Of all the things we can do wrong in a trial, the worst thing we can do is to begin to cast blame on God.

Remain Vigilant!

When you're going through a trial, you need to remain alert and vigilant, especially over your own heart. In fact, you need to always be on the alert, even if you're not in a trial now...because one will come! And when a trial comes, you need to be ready for it. When trials come, we should not be surprised by them. **1 PET 4:12 - "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you." "Strange" - "foreign to this life."**

Tempted to Blame God (v. 13a)

If we're not ready for or remaining vigilant through a trial, we can find ourselves tempted to blame God. James says it as clearly as he possibly can in **Verse 13 - "Let no one say when he is tempted..."** This is an absolute/universal command: **"NO ONE" - "not a single person is allowed to do this."** **"Be careful,"** James says, **"And make sure that this does not begin to happen in your heart."** If you're in a trial and are starting to be tempted to sin, the last person you should think about blaming...

Primary Reason to Never Blame God (v. 13b)

There is one central/primary reason James tells us we're not to blame God for our temptations to sin: The primary reason you and I can never blame God has to do with God's relationship to evil. The nature of God's relationship with evil makes it irrational for us to ever attempt to accuse Him. The holiness/perfection of God will never allow such an accusation to stick.

God Tempted & Tempting

Because of God's nature and relationship to evil, James says He cannot be tempted and He cannot tempt. **1. God cannot be tempted** - God's nature (omnipotent, omni...) ensures evil has no appeal/affect on Him. Literally this says God is **"untemptable"** (combination of **"tempt"** and the **"a-"** alpha privative). **2. God cannot tempt** - because God cannot be "accessed" by evil, He cannot somehow use it to tempt. The separation between God and evil is too great. He can't go near it, let alone use it as some sort of tool.

This is Nothing New

What I find so amazing is that the propensity for man to blame God for his sin came immediately after... This is not something that was a new trend in James's day that he was warning his readers about. This propensity of man to blame God for his sin is as old as sin itself. In fact, what James is warning us about is what the very first man did with the very first sin of all history! It's astounding to me how accurate a case study **GEN 3** is of **JAMES 1:13-15**. (**YOU READ GEN 3:1-11**) This illustrates what James is warning us about to a "T". And it's the very first man and woman!

Contrast: Job & Jesus

It would be helpful to contrast Adam and Eve with someone who endured a far greater trial: **JOB**. After the shock/awe of extreme trial **JOB 1:22 - "Through all this Job did no sin nor did he blame God."** Here is a man who isn't still in an unfallen state being tempted to eat a piece of fruit. No, here is a man who has all of his life as he knows it stripped from him in a matter of minutes. There's a reason why James uses Job as the epitome of endurance in **JAMES 5:11**. Of course the absolute epitome of endurance is Christ, whom Peter uses as our example in **1 PETER**.

APPLICATION

Is anyone here this morning going through trial? **“You’re either in one, just came out, or going in.”**
If you’re in one, how are you doing? If you just came out, how did you do? You may be about to go in...
Are you ready for trial? Are you persevering through one? Are you alert and carefully guarding your heart?
Beware, lest the trial subtly become a temptation to sin. And beware lest you begin to blame God.

GOSPEL

If you’re here and you’re not a Christian, you need to realize that you are guilty before God of sin.
The culpability for that sin, and the temptation that keeps leading you to sin, is strictly on your shoulders.
You will not be able to stand before God one day and somehow place the blame for your sin on someone else.
You’ll have to answer to an utterly holy God who will not allow sin to remain in His presence.
What are you going to say? What answer will you have when He asks you to give an account?
Do you realize that He’s made provision for you? He’s made a way for you to be forgiven.

TRANSITION

So James gives us a **NOTE**: It’s Good to Persevere. He gives us a **CAUTION**: It’s Bad to Blame God.
BL - Once your trial becomes a solicitation to sin, the failure/breakdown is on your part (see **Verse 14-15**).
That brings us to the **WARNING: It’s Worse to Give In (v. 14-15)**

3. **WARNING**: It’s Worse to Give In (v. 14-16)

Understanding Temptation

Giving in to temptation is the worst thing a believer can do when he/she is undergoing trial.
So, in order for us not to do that, we must first understand that God is not the source/the one tempting us.
Secondly, we must understand where it truly originates. It does not originate externally, but internally.

Sin’s Universal Pattern/Genealogy

James is going to dissect the nature of temptation for us. He’s going to break it down to the ABCs.
He’s going to give us the universally established pattern/order showing us where sin originates.
It has always followed this pattern and it will always follow this pattern.
It’s the same pattern it took with Eve in the garden and it’s the pattern it took when you last sinned.
There are several genealogies in the Bible, here is the universal genealogy of sin, evil desire, and death.

“Each One” (v. 14a)

Notice how he begins: **“But each one is tempted...”** This is the counter argument/answer to Verse 13.
Rather than temptation coming from God, here is where it really comes from.
“Each one” - this is the way it is with every single person, every single time temptation to sin occurs.
This is the way it is for all of us this morning. If you’re dealing w/temptation today, this is what’s going on.

Origination Point: “Lust”

“Each one is tempted WHEN...” Ok, so here is the real source from which temptation to sin originates.
James says it happens when you and I are **“carried away and enticed by our own lusts.”**
It originates with **“our own lusts.”** Not someone else’s lust, but **“our own lusts.”** Your lust. My lust.
“Lust” - desire, craving, longing. It’s the inner excitement of our passions, pleasures, inclinations, impulses.
This is where it all begins!

Set The Target There

Because sin and temptation begin with the lusts of our hearts, Scripture’s antidote is for us to target sin there.
ROM 6:12 - **“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.”**
ROM 13:14 - **“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”**
GAL 5:16 - **“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the lusts of the flesh.”**

EPH 4:22 - “Lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.”
COL 3:5 - “Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire (lust)...”
2 TIM 2:22 - Paul told Timothy, “Flee youthful lusts.”
1 PET 1:14 - “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours...”
John warns us in 1 JOHN 2:16 of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes.”
This is where it all begins!

The Danger of Lust (v. 14b)

“**Lusts**” in and of themselves are not bad. The word literally just describes desires, which can be good. The problem is when we’re “**carried away and enticed**” by them. It’s one thing to have desire, it’s another... “**Carried away**” - to drag or draw out. **ILLUST**: a dog or little child that’s hesitant to come to you. “**Enticed**” is very similar. It describes baiting someone/something (animal, fish). **ILLUST**: bass anglers. Notice the goal of these two descriptions. The goal is to make them unsuspecting or catch them unsuspecting. If you’re not careful, this is what your lusts can do. You can get caught by them. And once you’re caught...

James’ Illustrations

James is a very graphic writer. He uses illustrations all throughout his book. Just in Ch. 1 he uses surf of sea, scorched grass/flowers, lights/shadows, planted seed, mirrors. In Verse 14 he used the illustration of trapping an animal of prey or a fish to describe our enticement to sin. In Verse 15 he uses the illustration of conception and giving of birth to describe the process of sin/death.

The Process of Sin (v. 15)

There is a clearly repeated/universal process that takes place when one gives into temptation to sin. The process begins with a temptation. If we’re not on guard/resistant, we will be carried away/enticed by it. Once we’re carried away/enticed, our lust and that temptation to sin unite. They join each other as a man... At that point, James says “**lust conceives**” - your lust/the temptation have come together to produce offspring. **Q**: What is the offspring that is brought forth? **A**: **SIN!** - you violate God’s purpose/transgress God’s will. As soon as that happens...as soon as sin is brought about, it generates “**DEATH.**”

Death Is Always The Result

I mentioned earlier that this process has been the process since our first parents sinned in the garden. Just as it’s been the same process through the ages, the results are the same as well: “**DEATH.**”
GEN 2:17 - “**For in the day that you eat from it you will surely ... DIE.**”
Sin brought forth “**death**” for Adam/Eve and sin brings forth “**death**” when you and I sin.
ROM 5:12 - “**Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.**”

V. 16 - Don’t Be Deceived!

Because James (and all of Scripture) is so clear about the nature/process/results of temptation and sin, he gives the final warning in **Verse 16** - “**Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**”
Verse 16 is a “**hinge verse**” - it concludes **Verses 12-15** and introduces **Verses 17-18**.
“**In light of what I’ve just detailed for you, do not be deceived!**” “**Take what I’ve said to you seriously.**”
“**Don’t stray from the truth I’ve just shared.**” “**Don’t let anyone tell you someone else is to blame.**”
“**Consider for yourselves what I’ve said in light of your own battle against temptation and sin.**”

Look at Scripture

I’ll tell you, one of the reasons none of us should be deceived/stray from what James is saying: Scripture. Scripture validates the truthfulness of what James has been saying. It’s filled with illustrations/examples. Adam/Eve, Cain, Children of Israel, Achan, David, Solomon, Judas, Ananias/Sapphira, Demas
We have proof after proof that this is how temptation and sin works and that it brings nothing but disaster!

We All Fail

We are not greater than all of these people I’ve just mentioned; we’ve all failed in our battle with temptation.

The spiritually strongest among us can still fall victim to being “**carried away and enticed by his lusts.**”

GOSPEL

Those of you here that are not Christians, you are powerless to resist temptation and sin. You may try... You are spiritually dead. As long as you are spiritually dead, you will not have the ability to escape. God has made a way for you not only to be forgiven of your sin, but to be freed from its power. Christ conquered temptation and sin so that you can have His power (by the Spirit) to overcome. You must recognize your sin, your powerlessness, and cast yourself completely upon Him for salvation.

BELIEVER

While we remain in this flesh, we will continue to battle temptation and sin, but we must understand it.

We must understand this process, the nature of our lusts, the serious consequences to being “**carried away...**”

We must depend upon Christ and upon the HS if we are going to win the fight against sin.

GAL 5:16 - “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

ROM 8:13 - “If you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

ROM 13:14 - “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”

CONCLUSION

- It’s good to persevere. It’s bad to blame God. It’s worse to give in.
- Let’s fight the good fight of faith, finish the course, take hold of the eternal life to which we’ve been called.
- Let’s persevere together, because once we’ve been approved, we will receive the crown of life which Christ has promised to all those who love Him.