



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

James 1:12-18

James

"Temptations"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our study this evening in the Book of James, and we're going to look in chapter 1, verses 12 through 18. But before we do that, let's begin with the word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for the time we have together this evening. We thank You for bringing us together and for the opportunity that we have to read Your word and then consider it in some depth. We pray that You would bless us as we do that, and that You would guide us in our thinking. And may our understanding of this text have its practical outworking in our lives. We might be men and women who have a greater confidence in You, deeper trust in You, and will go forth and live lives that are pleasing to You and are good witnesses to the world.

We look to You to bless us to that end. Pray You'd bless our time of study, our time of prayer afterwards as we approach the throne of grace again and look to You to bless us in various ways. We pray also for the young people as they meet. Bless them as they are instructed, and bless their fellowship. Bless all of us this evening that we might grow in the faith. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Our text, as I said is James 1. We're going to look at verses 12 through 18. James writes, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life with the Lord 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 does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures."

You sometimes hear the people express a kind of cynical view on life with the statement, life is hard, then you die. Well, there's some truth in that, of course. Life can be hard, and we do die. But that's not all there is to it. Life is not the end, which that might suggest, and there is a lot of joy in the lives that we have, at least for the child of God that's true. And James addresses that.

There are many good things in life. It is not all hard. Every good thing is from above, he says, in verse 17. And we should be thankful because God gives us many good things, more than we realize, and far more than we ever thank Him for. And even when life is hard, it is hard for a good purpose.

James discussed that in the first part of chapter 1 where he deals with the trials of life. They test our faith, but for the purpose of giving us endurance, which leads to maturity. Trials happen in order to build character in this life. That's how God makes us grow. That's how He makes us useful.

But there's also a future blessing attached to trials, one of eternal reward. And that is what James speaks of in verse 12, the crown of life for the person who endures. Verse 12 makes a fitting conclusion to the discussion that went before, the discussion on trials. So we could have ended at that point, summed it up with verse 12, but it also makes a good introduction for what follows, that is an introduction to his next subject, which is that of temptations.

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.” That’s the New American Standard Bible’s translation. The King James version, if you have that is, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptations.” So the translations differ in trials or temptations, which is the correct one, is the question we might ask. And either one is valid, because the Greek word that is used there is the same, and it means both trials or temptations.

The word that’s used is the word we had earlier in verse 2, “Consider all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.” I think that is the correct interpretation or the correct translation of the word in verse 12. We should take it that way since temptations require resistance rather than endurance. Trials require endurance. And so the word can be translated either way. It’s the same word with two different meanings, but the context would suggest that this is not temptation but trials.

A person who endures, who perseveres under trials is a blessed person or a happy person, as it can be translated, a person who is in a very desirable condition. Happiness, at least in this sense, in the Christian sense of the term, not in the sense of the way the world uses happiness, but happiness, or joy, or blessedness, is something that the believer can have even in hard circumstances.

Now our joy, our happiness, our blessedness is not tied to the circumstances. It doesn’t consist of being free of trials. That’s how the world would view things. If you have trials you can’t be happy. If you have trials you can’t have joy. There’s no occasion for that. But that’s not the case.

With us, happiness, joy, blessedness in life does not consist in being free of difficulty, free of hardship. It consists of remaining steadfast in the midst of those hardships. Perseverance is a good word here. It’s a good way to view it or translate it. It is a word in the present tense indicating that it goes on. This is an ongoing situation. It is a long ordeal, and that calls for perseverance. That calls for endurance.

Now that doesn't mean we never fail in the midst of that. Perseverance doesn't suggest that a person never stumbles along the way. It means that he keeps going, or she keeps going. When we walk, we stumble; particularly when we're learning to walk. We fall down and what do we do? We get up. We pick ourselves up and we move forward. And it's the same when we fail or we stumble so to speak in the Christian life, in our walk with the Lord. We do that. We will do that.

But the response is to repent and pick ourselves up so to speak, to recover from that stumbling, that falling, and then go forward. That's how we persevere. That's how we continue in the Christian life. There's no suggestion in the New Testament that we reach a state of sinless perfection in this life short of the grave. We will not. But the believer, the true child of God perseveres, continues to go forward.

Well the reason that such a person who endures trials is called blessed, or happy, or joyful, is because he or she has hope. The hope of future blessing. And that's the promise given in the explanation that follows. "For once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." That word approved speaks of testing coins, or testing metal, to determine whether or not they are genuine.

Well trials do that for our faith. We undergo difficulty as we endure those trials. We give evidence. We give increasing proof. We give new proof of our faithfulness to God. And that endurance, James says, will be rewarded with the crown of life. The crown of life is not eternal life. We have that with regeneration. We have that at the moment of faith.

This is something in addition to that. This is a reward given to those who have life. This is a reward that's given to those who persevere in the Christian life. Crown of life. It's a future reward that the Lord will give at His second coming. It is left undefined by James. He doesn't tell us what it is, but it's obviously a special

blessing, a special honor of eternal value; maybe authority. Crowns reflect that. They have to do with authority, with power, and perhaps it has to do with position of some kind throughout eternity or in the millennial kingdom.

A word that's used here is **stefanos**. We get the word, the name Steven from that, and it's the same word that's found in Revelation 4:10 where in heaven there's that scene before the throne of God where the 24 elders bow down and they give all honor to God, and they cast their crowns at His throne. And what that suggests, among other things, is that their crowns are really His crowns. They have them, they possess them, but only by the grace of God. And that's true of everything that we have.

Every possession that is ours is ours by gift. And ultimately, the perseverance that obtains such a crown, a crown of life, is a gift of God. We only persevere because God enables us to do that. He gives us the life. He gives us the ability. We don't persevere on our own strength. That's impossible. None could do that.

So all that we have, our crowns, our very ability to obtain the crowns come from Him. It's all of grace. And for those who love Him, that's what James says, who love the Lord.

In Hebrews 11 we have those who persevere describe as faithful. It's the great passage, the great chapter on Christian faith, and it really looks at the Old Testament saint to encourage the New Testament saint by their perseverance. But there we read toward the end of the chapter in verse 38, "Of men of whom the world is not worth." And they are described in what they suffer. In fact all through that chapter suffering and privation is described, but it comes to kind of an intense ending there toward the end of the chapter. And they suffered much, wandering in deserts, and mountains, and caves, and living in holes in the ground. Pretty desperate kinds of condition.

Those are great trials. Those are the kind of trials that call for great perseverance. The man or the woman who is a man or woman of faith perseveres. They persevere because they love the Lord, and they

undergo that kind of life. They undergo privation. They undergo hardship. Those are trials, but they will not go unrewarded. The reward, if you go back to chapter 11 of Hebrews and read it, it's not in this life. They got their life in desperation in wandering and living in such places as holes in the ground.

But the hope that they had is of a city that has foundations, the same that Abraham had. It's of a future day, it's of a day of greater life, and of great reward. And that is our hope. In the midst of trial we can be considered be blessed. We can rejoice as we endure because there is life to come. This world is a world of shadows. We are moving toward the world of light, and we are moving toward great rewards as we persevere and as we endure.

So life is hard. It's harder for some than others. And then we do die. But that is not the end. There follows great blessing for God's people, and great reward for those who endure.

But trials are not the only challenges that make life hard. There are also temptations. And sometimes the hardships of a trial can occasion temptation. A person who wanders in a desert or lives in a hole in the ground can be tempted to covet the rich man who lives in luxury. The poor man can desire the wealth and the leisure of the rich man. And often temptations follow from the trials of life. They grow out of that. And very often temptations are just there. They are an everyday part of life.

And so James takes up that as his next major subject. It moves naturally from the trials of life to the temptations that can often follow. And he begins by reminding his readers that temptations are not from God. Let no one say when he is tempted, I'm being tempted by God.

As I said earlier, the word temptation is the same as the word testing. And the verb can indicate an action that has either a good or a bad intention. If the intention is good, then it is a test, and God does that. He does test our faith. James has made that very clear. But if the action has an evil aim, if it is intended to make a person sin,

draw them, entice them into some evil kind of conduct, then that is not of God, can't be of God. And James forbids anyone making that accusation. Let no one say, he says. Because he knew that that is the tendency of human nature. Tendency of human nature is to blame others, to blame God, to blame other people. We don't like to acknowledge our failures. We don't like to own up to our guilt.

And so the natural tendency of man is to blame someone else. It's been that way from the very beginning. We see that with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. We read in verse 12 Adam said, "The woman whom You gave to me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." So he puts the blame on Eve, and then Eve puts it on the serpent. The serpent deceived me, she said. In other words, I did it. It's true. You've caught me, but there's a reason for it. It's not really my fault. The woman you gave to me, and what Adam was really saying is, You gave her to me. I wouldn't be in this situation if it wasn't for her, and I wouldn't have her if you hadn't given her to me. And then Eve is really suggesting something of the same. Because you made the serpent. I was deceived by the serpent, and who made the serpent? Who put him this garden?

Well God did give the woman to the man. He gave the woman to the man to be a helper. She is what he needed. He would not have been complete without her. She was a blessing. And He did create the serpent. He made everything that is, but He didn't make them sin. He gave them life. He gave them the garden. He gave them freedom to eat of every tree in the garden. He gave them every advantage that they could desire. Every advantage in the world was theirs.

They sinned, not because of anything that God did to them. They sinned because they wanted to. And whenever a person sins, it is because he or she chooses to do so. Every good thing comes from God, James tells us in verse 17. Testing is good. It makes us strong. It makes us mature. God does that. But He doesn't test or tempt with evil for the intent or the purpose of drawing a person into sin. God does not do that.

First Corinthians 10:13 Paul speaks to this issue. And in there he states that God doesn't permit a person, doesn't permit one of His children to be tempted beyond his or her ability to endure it. Doesn't let the temptation go that long, and He always provide a way of escape. There's always a way out.

So if we fail, if we stumble, it's not because God puts some obstacle in the way that was too great for us; cannot be that way. It maybe the excuse we lean upon, but that is not truly the case.

A Lutheran commentator, [R.C.H. Lenski](#) wrote, "When God sent Jesus to be tempted by Satan and, when now He lets Satan tempt us, we should not blame God, but should remember that God's own spirit helped Jesus to crush Satan, and that He now helps us to vanquish him." That's true. We have the spirit of God within us. We are well equipped to deal with the trials of life and all of the temptations of life as well.

James goes on to justify his objection to the claim that God is to blame for temptation. He says, first, God cannot be tempted by evil. Now that's an important statement on the nature of God. God is perfect. He is unsusceptible to evil. It does not appeal to Him. Evil and sin cannot appeal to Him. He cannot be tempted by evil.

One of the commentators on the Book of James, very good commentator, Edmund Hebert, writes that this fact that God is untemptable of evil is the foundation for the Christian belief in a moral universe. It is. The very fact that God is pure and can never support evil against us is the assurance that goodness is for us, that His goodness is for us, and that He supports us. We can rely upon that.

We live in a moral universe with moral consequences. James will develop that because of who God is. And we can be confident in obedience to Him because of who He is. He can't be tempted by evil. He's different from the god's of the ancient world. All of those deities in the Greek and the Roman pantheon, and all of the eastern gods of the Babylonians or the Egyptians, they were just like people,

you know the stories the myths how they seduced and were seduced. They engaged in the same kind of behavior as men do, because they are the figment of man's imagination and they reflect the character of man.

Well they do temp, and perhaps some of James's readership was influenced by some of the thoughts of his day. I don't know that to be the case. I think it's just the case that we tend to blame others, and we tend to become angry and blame God. And James says it cannot be. He's not like the gods of the world. He is not tempted. He does not fall prey to that. And because He does not, cannot be tempted, He cannot do that. That's the second point that he makes, second justification of his rejection of that complaint is that He himself does not tempt anyone.

There's nothing in His actions that would suggest that He does. We cannot be blame Him for that. God cannot be tempted and God will not tempt.

Someone has said Satan tempts to bring out the bad, God tests to bring out the good. So we can't blame God when our trials become temptations. They're the product of our own sinful self, our own hearts.

That's how James explains temptation in the next verses, in verses 14 and 15. The source of it is not in God. The source of all of that is in man. Verse 14, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." Notice, not carried away and enticed by Satan, or enticed by a seducer. James believed in the evil influence of both. In fact, he'll speak of Satan later on in the book.

But here, he is concerned to put the blame where it belongs, and that is on the human heart. He is dealing with those who are complaining and casting blame upon God. So he's very anxious to dispel that, to deal with that objection. The idea is that man is carried away and enticed by his own desire. That's the sense of the statement that James makes, carried away and enticed by his own desire. His

own sinful passion. His lust draws him out, carries him away toward the desired object and his lust gives him the appetite for it.

The language here suggests a fish swimming along its course and being drawn off by the bait that is on a hook, and he bites it. That's the picture we have. Everything that James says here assumes the depravity of the human heart. He doesn't have anything good to say about the human heart in this text. We sin because we're sinful, not because the devil made us do it, not because someone tempted us outside of ourselves. We sin, we succumb because we choose to do that.

We're responsible for what we do, and what we do has consequences. James gives the consequences of yielding to temptation in verse 15 by describing it in the language of childbirth. It's a very graphic, very pictorial description. He says, "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished," when sin becomes full blown, because the sin is there in lust. We can say that but it's not full blown. When it is accomplished, when it becomes fully developed, "it brings forth death."

So there is a sequence. The inner desire, the lust demands action. It must either be acted on or it must be resisted. When we indulge desire then a chain of events follows. Sin occurs and death results. Certain desires, certain cravings, certain appetites, they arise within us because of our condition, because of our nature. It's fallen. And so it has these desires within in.

Sin is within our members and we have these natural desires or these – I shouldn't say natural desires. We have, we naturally have these desires, sinful desires within us. They may be something as seemingly innocuous, an inapprop – an appetite for food that is at an inappropriate time. We shouldn't be eating. We put ourselves on a diet but we've got this urge to eat. Or something like a desire for power or pleasure. That desire is there and it must be acted upon. Must either resist it or act upon it.

But when it is acted upon, when the will yields to the lust, then lust conceives. It gives birth to sin. And sin always has destructive consequences to the person who sins, as well as to others. But when that sin becomes fully developed, when it comes forth, when it becomes an action, when it takes place, then it gives birth to death. That's the consequence; death.

I don't know that James had the thought of Proverb 7 when he wrote that. That thought came to me because that seems to fit well with what James is saying. You know the passage where Solomon is going to instruct his son, and he talks about something that he'd seen. He was looking through his lattice work and saw a young man walking down a street, and the man meets a woman, a married woman who comes out, and entices him. Tells him that her husband is away; he'll be gone for a long time, and the bed is prepared, and she invites him in. She entices him. And he yields to that. He goes into her house as an ox goes to the slaughter, Solomon says, not knowing that it will cost him his life.

Now I don't think that Solomon means that the man, young man met foul play when he was in the house or he just never emerged again, he passed away there. I am sure that if the scene were to continue he'd emerge from the house, maybe very happy with his experience, or maybe a bit grieved by it. But whether or not, how he felt good or bad about it he would come out a different man from the one that went in. Something died. Sin kills. Sin poisons. And that's the point.

When it's born, it brings death. That's the result. It's the opposite of the blessed life with God in verse 12. That's not an easy life that he describes in verse 12. Perseverance under trial is hard. It's difficult. It's a great trial. But it leads to the crown of life. Yielding to sin, yielding to pleasure, that's easy, but it leads to death.

Wisdom comes in knowing that. This is what the Book of James is about. It's about wisdom. It's about the wise life. It's how to live a godly life, principles of conduct. And wisdom comes in knowing

this fact about ourselves, knowing that we are weak, knowing what our weaknesses are. Knowing that we're just dust. And avoiding the temptations. Don't let them get near you. Don't go near the places where temptations lurk. Flee youthful lusts. Get away from it. That's how we deal with it.

Do not be deceived, James says in verse 16. Don't be deceived about the source and the consequence of sin. Temptation promises pleasure. That's why it's a temptation. The result is sin that delivers death. We need to know that. We need to know the consequences of sin and not be deceived about it. We need to know the source of sin that it is not God. That's the point that he's making. That's what he's developing here. It's not God. It's the human heart. To blame God casts suspicion on his character. It undermines confidence in God, not only in ourselves if we entertain that idea, but in other people who might be subject to what we are saying. Hear it and come under the influence of it. And, simply put, it's a blasphemy. It's not true. And James has developed that.

God is not the author of sin. And to reinforce that, James gives a double picture of God's benevolence in human affairs. In verse 17, he describes Him as the giver of all good gifts. And in verse 18, it describes him as the giver of all spiritual life, the source of regeneration.

Verse 17, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." James takes pains to emphasize the point. Every good gift and every perfect gift, it's all from God. It's a sweeping statement. There are no exceptions to it. If there's something good, then it's from God. Not from man. Not from the human heart.

James believed in total depravity. Verses 14 and 15 indicate that. And verse 17 indicates that he didn't believe in the self-made man. Who can boast in that? Who can boast in making themselves what they are if he or she believes verse 17? Do you have good

health? If you're a self-made man or woman you have to have some advantages. You have to have some, you have to have something. You got to have life to begin with. You didn't give yourself life. But having life you got to have certain, a certain quality of life.

Health, if you have health, is that a good thing? If you have intelligence is that a good thing? Favorable circumstances and opportunities, are those good things? The self-made man is one who's had opportunities. What the world would call luck. Has good health, has a good mind. Has something, something to give him or her advantage.

But what James tells us is if it's good, and those things are all good, if it's good it's all come down from the Father of lights. So what good thing do you have? Whether it's small or whether it's great, if it's good it's from God; it came from Him. It's His gift. That's what God's like.

In fact He, His giving is constant. That's how it's described here. The force of the participle, which is a present participle is coming down as a sense of being constant. It's always coming down. He never stops blessing the world. He is the Father of lights, James says. He's the creator of the luminaries, the stars. So He's the one who causes the sun to shine and also the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. That's what our Lord said in Matthew 5:45.

He gives good things to the good and the bad alike. Every good thing comes from Him. But more importantly than this description of the Father of lights, is it illustrates His character. 1 John 1:5, God is light. And so He is the source of all spiritual illumination. That's what John is saying. And John adds to God is light, and in Him there is not darkness at all.

James makes a statement that's very similar. Having described God as light or God as the Father of lights, he adds, with whom there is not variation or shifting shadow. God is constant. The constancy of God's giving good gifts is consistent with the constancy of His character. God is immutable. God does not change. He's not subject

to the circumstances of life. We change. We may have the best intention to be unchangeable or consistent and constant, but we fall prey to the circumstances of life. It may be tripped up by a deception, or we may fall prey to a virus or an illness and we can't be as constant as we would like.

God's not like that. He is not subject to the circumstances. He's immutable. The sun, with whom I think the illustration is being taken, the Father of lights, we think of the brightness of the sun, the sun, the moon, the great luminaries of the heavens, they are not changeless. They change. The radiance of the sun changes from sun up to sun down. The moon changes its shape throughout the month from a full moon to a crescent. There are summer and winter solstice. There are solar and lunar eclipse. The sun, the moon, the stars are always changing. They're not constant. But God doesn't vary. He's the Father of lights who never changes. He's absolutely dependable. His promises never fail.

Guy King, who has written a good little commentary, devotional commentary on the Book of James, tells a legend of an ancient kingdom whose king had died and so the ambassadors went out to select a new king from two twin infants. So they found these two infants and they looked at the children and they couldn't see any difference between them. They were identical, and they confessed they didn't know how to decide which one to choose, which one would be their king, until they noticed a slight difference. And one of the infants was clinching his little fist very tightly, and the other had his hand open. So they chose the one with the open hand, and that child grew up to become a king known as the King With The Open Hand, a generous king.

And that's how God rules His world. He rules His world with an open hand. He is generous. He gives good gifts. And those gifts are witnesses of His goodness. But the greatest witness of God's goodness is the life that he gives in the new birth. He is the author of Regeneration, verse 18. In the exercise of His will He brought us

forth by the word of truth so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. God's will is the cause of the believer's regeneration. It's not the goodness of the believer. It is God's grace.

In fact James puts emphasis on God's will. He puts it at the very beginning of the sentence to emphasize that it's God's will that is the cause of the new birth that he describes here. He brought us forth. That is the same verb, by the way, that's used in verse 15, of sin bringing forth death. And so what James is suggesting here, or indicating, is that God willed not to let sin destroy His work and let His people perish. He chose not to do that. He chose to save us. Not because there was something good in us, not because there's something admirable. He looked on our heart, which is the source of sin and He saw just that.

But he chose from all eternity to save His people, because He willed to do it. That's as simple as it can be, and as far back as we can go. Not to us, but to God and to His free choice to save.

Now that fact is completely contrary to the claim that God tempts His people to sin. He doesn't do that. He's the giver of good gifts. All good things come from Him. He's the giver of spiritual life. He doesn't lead His people into sin.

All through the Book of James there are principles of conduct. Conduct which evidences genuine spiritual life, genuine faith. But the evidence of life is not the cause of life. God is the cause of spiritual life. God is the cause of the new birth. Before there is life, it must be implanted in the soul and only God can do that.

One of the commentators made that point. He, or he made the point that the emphasis here is on the will of God. And insightful, he cited, Ephesians 2:4-10 to support what he called the sole originating and effecting cause of the new birth, which is in God and in His will. And that is a good passage for such a point, because Ephesians 2 is all about the grace of God. It begins in verses 1 through 3 by pointing our need, our helplessness, our unworthiness that we are dead in our

transgressions and sin. And then verses 4 and 5 gives the contrast, but God made us alive. It's all of God, not of us.

Unfortunately, the same commentator went on to explain God's will as being subordinate to the believer's will. He wrote, "It is a matter of will, indeed of two wills. First and foremost, and fundamentally, God's will, and then our will." Now that's true. That's a good statement. But then he adds, "God says, 'I will if you will,'" which is a contradiction in what he's been saying. If that's the case, then we don't need to be reborn. We're already full of spiritual life. If we can say I will, what's the need of regeneration?

But we know from the rest of Scripture that if it is that way, that God says, "I will if you will," then He will never say I will, because we'll never say I will. We're in rebellion against God. No man seeks after God. The correct order is, you will because I will. That's how it works. That's the grace of God. The new birth is all of God. It is unconditional and free.

But the new birth does involve our will. Our will is acted upon. God makes us willing, and He addresses our will with His word. That's what James indicates with the statement, "He brought us forth by the word of truth." The teaching or preaching of the gospel is the means by which God effects spiritual life or regeneration. It is caused by the spirit of God. He is the agent. He gives us new birth. But what he uses is the gospel.

That's what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:23-25, "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." So it's as the word of God's preached that the spirit of God works through that word to quicken the soul, to bring him in to life and to faith in the Gospel that he or she is hearing. And the goal of that is to be the first fruits among God's creatures. That's how the text ends.

First fruits is an expression that's taken from the Old Testament. It referred to the first part of the harvest that was offered to God before the rest of the harvest could be used for ordinary purposes.

And it was an expression that would have been particularly meaningful for James's audience, which I think it's correct to assume was a Jewish audience, a Jewish Christian audience. And he's telling them that you're the first fruits, and they were. The Jewish people were the first of a great harvest that is still going on today.

And that's what's characteristic of God. He is a god who saves. And there is a great harvest that is taking place; has down through the centuries and will continue until the Lord comes back. And then in the kingdom there will be a great harvest of multitude of people coming to faith.

This is the god that James presents to us. Not a god who tempts man to sin, but a god who gives good things, and gives life and spiritual life, and blessing to help us.

Now most of you read your bibles. Now you wouldn't be here on a Wednesday night when you could be watching the Republican Convention and you didn't read your bibles. And some of you read your bibles like Jack Perry who reads through it every year. And so perhaps you know some of these obscure texts of Scripture that might have come to mind while we were going through this lesson on the fact that God does not tempt with sin. And perhaps you thought of 2 Chronicles 18:18-22. I know all of you were thinking about that, weren't you?

And that's that text where Ahab is about to go into battle and he learns something from Makiah the prophet. Makiah had insight into what went on in heaven. And there we read of God sending forth a deceiving spirit to entice Ahab to go up to a fatal battle. So you might read a text like that and you might ask the question, well, but doesn't that contradict what James is saying here? He says God doesn't tempt anyone, and yet, what does he do? He sends a deceiving spirit to entice Ahab.

Well no, there's no contradiction because first of all, God didn't entice Ahab. The evil spirit enticed Ahab. God is not the author of sin. God does not tempt people, doesn't not test, tempt people and

lead them into sin. But you say, well God said it though. Doesn't that make him culpable in that? God did send the evil spirit; that's true. But He sent the evil spirit in judgment on Ahab who was an evil man, who was a man who was an idolater, who was given over to the lie, who had embraced the lie. And so what God does in judgment in this case, and in all kinds of cases, is He gives the sinner over to his or her sin. Read Romans 1. Three times we read, and God gave them over.

And that's in effect what he was doing with Ahab. He was bringing judgment on a wicked man. In fact, he let Ahab know this. We know what happened, because Makiah the prophet is telling it to Ahab. So Ahab learns of everything that's happening. Ahab learns, you know, you've been deceived by an evil spirit, a deceiving spirit. And Ahab wouldn't believe it. He rejected it. He had the full knowledge of it, and he rejected it.

So God does not tempt people into sin. He cannot do that. He brings judgment on the evil, but He does not tempt anyone, does not tempt us into sin. Sin is our doing. It issues from an evil heart. God redeems sinners from their evil and from their sin, and he gives them a new heart. Now God is for His people. And that's what James is reassuring these people of.

So for the Christian, life is hard, but it is hard for a good purpose. It makes us mature in the present. It gives us maturity to face more difficult trials. And through endurance through those trials we receive a crown of life and great reward. So we are blessed, as James writes in verse 12, and we can consider it all joy when we have various trials, as he said in verse 2. Because God is blessing us and will continue to do so.

Well that should encourage us and hopefully gives us endurance in the midst of trials, and wisdom as we face temptations. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for the fact that You are the Father of lights and there is no variation or shifting shadow in You, and You are reliable. But we are weak, and we pray that You would give us endurance in trials, and that you would give us wisdom as we

face temptations. We look to you to bless to that end. We thank You for your goodness and Your grace, and it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.