

# THE BATTLE AGAINST SIN

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Text: James 1:12-18

■ In one scene of the popular movie *Robin Hood, The Prince of Thieves*, Kevin Costner as Robin comes to a young man taking aim at an archery target. Robin asks, "Can you shoot amid distractions?"

Just before the boy releases the string, Robin pokes his ear with the feathers of an arrow. The boy's shot flies high by several feet.

After the laughter of those watching dies down, Maid Marian, standing behind the boy, asks Robin, "Can you?"

Robin Hood raises his bow and takes aim. Just as he releases the arrow, Maid Marian leans beside him and flirtatiously blows into his face. The arrow misses the target, glances off the tree behind it, and scarcely misses a bystander.

Distractions come in all types, and whether they are painful or pleasant, the result is the same: we miss God's mark.

-- Penney F. Nichols in *Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Baker), from the editors of *Leadership*.

***Missing the mark is what sin is all about.*** Sin is not necessarily something that we just fall into. We are most often aiming for the approval of God; but then distractions come. And nothing seems so distracting as sin's allure. In fact, it has been more effective than we like to remember.

■ Charles Swindoll writes, "Countless people have wrecked their lives on the jagged reefs of immorality, drawn in by temptation's seductive song. Temptation, however, involves more than just sexual sin. We can be tempted by things and titles as much as by people. Students and businessmen alike are constantly being wooed to destruction by cheating's enticing entreaties. Many friendships lay battered and broken apart on the rocks where gossip sings. And floating face down beneath the choral urgings of power and popularity are the washed-out lives of leaders, pastors, teens, parents, executives, politicians—people who veered off course from following God for the tempting promise of fulfillment some other way." (Swindoll, 33)

James states that "Blessed is the man" that can resist temptation's allure and obtain the victory over it. However, James is doing more than pronouncing a blessing; he is establishing a theme of "victory through constant vigilance." He begins by addressing the ***problems*** that every Christian will face.

## I. THERE IS THE TEMPTATION TO ENGAGE IN SIN (vv.12-13).

A. Temptation comes to everyone.

What can you do when temptation comes your way?

■ A little girl was asked what she did when she was tempted. She replied, "Well, when I hear Satan come knocking at the door of my heart, I just say to the Lord Jesus, who lives within my heart, 'Lord Jesus, will You please go to the door?' And then, when the Lord Jesus opens the door, Satan draws away and says, 'Oh, excuse me, I have made a mistake.'"

God has given us Himself to dwell within our hearts. The Living Word is there with a full command of the Written Word. When we let Him meet the temptation in our behalf we shall know the joy of positive victory. We are fortunate that one victory does not help us to win another, for our hearts are kept from feasting upon an experience so that we may gaze upon the living Lord Jesus Christ. (Barnhouse, 317)

The blessing of overcoming sin is that we will receive an ETERNAL REWARD for a TEMPORARY BATTLE.

B. Some may wonder, "Does God play a part in temptation?"

*First of all, remember that God never tempts us to sin; however, He often allows us to be tempted in order to build our Christian character and faith. Nevertheless, He puts a limit on the devil's ability to push the temptation and He always makes a way of escape. God has no part with sin, as light has no fellowship with darkness.*

■ Donald W. Burdick writes, "The first reason why temptation does not come from God is that God "cannot be tempted by evil." That is, He cannot be successfully tempted. His omnipotent, holy will resists any invitation to sin. Furthermore, in Him there is not the slightest moral depravity to which temptation may appeal. Therefore, it is inconsistent to think that God could be the author of temptation." (172)

## II. JAMES WARNS OF THE PROGRESSION OF SIN (vv.14-15).

A. Sin comes by way of man's evil desires (v.14).

No one can make us sin. We are drawn away by our own lusts, our desires, our wants and covetous ways.

■ Notice that there is a 4-step by which sin does its work:

- The bait is dropped.
- Our inner desire is attracted to the bait.
- Sin occurs when we yield to temptation.
- Sin results in death. (Swindoll, 35-36)

B. We give life to sin by yielding to it (v.15a).

One pastor tells this story.

■ "At the close of a sermon on Sunday morning, one of the members of the church came forward at the invitation. He was noticeably disturbed and moved by his conviction of sin in his life. With tears flowing and a halt in his voice he took my hand and meant to tell me that his life was full of sin. But what came out was, "My sin is full of life." As soon as he had spoken he realized his mistake and changed it, but in reality his first statement was the real reason for the second. His sin was full of life and that is why his life was full of sin. Praise God that the blood of Jesus Christ is the remedy and he found it that day." (Hewett, 454)

C. By the time we realize the progression of sin, it has destroyed us (v.15b).

■ Max Lucado says, "Guilt creeps in on cat's paws and steals whatever joy might have flickered in our eyes. Confidence is replaced by doubt, and honesty is elbowed out by rationalization. Exit peace. Enter turmoil. Just as the pleasure of indulgence ceases, the hunger for relief begins.

Our vision is shortsighted and our myopic life now has but one purpose—to find release for our guilt. Or as Paul questioned for all of us, 'What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?'" (139)

Sin is a soul-sickness that will eventually kill the soul.

- First, LUST is conceived by an evil desire.
- Second, SIN is born after the birth pangs of sin have run their course.
- Third, when sin that has not been repented of grows up it will kill the soul and bring DEATH.

Yet, we are not without hope.

### III. GOD GIVES US THE VICTORY OVER SIN (vv. 16-18).

A. The victory is only lost when we choose to follow another way (v.16).

***"Do not err," or "do not be deceived,"*** James warns.

Do not think for a moment that sin will bring you true happiness.

B. Our victory is based on God's goodness (v.17).

■ "Every good...every perfect gift...comes down from the Father of lights."

■ "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

C. One of God's greatest gifts to us is a NEW MIND in Christ (v.18).

■ Paul said in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

■ And again in Philippians 2:5 he reminds us, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

This spiritual mind that God gives us desires SPIRITUAL things OVER SINFUL things. It could be said the victory is all in your mind—in the mind God gives you!

■ Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "...whatever things are true... noble... just... pure... lovely...of a good report...if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things."

We can say "we can not help it," but if the Word of God is true it tells us that "through Christ we are overcomers."

Sin must be overcome by God's power. Therefore, He gives us power over the enemy. I'M SORRY, BUT THE DEVIL DID NOT MAKE YOU DO IT.

D. James appeals to these Christians to resist sin based on their new birth (v. 18).

**The Reason:** "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth." or "By His own will and word He chose to save us."

**The Result:** They would become a kind of "first fruits" or an indication of what God would continue to do in the centuries to come.

## CONCLUSION

■ In 1982, "ABC Evening News" reported on an unusual work of modern art – a chair affixed to a shotgun. It was to be viewed by sitting in the chair and looking directly into the gun barrel. The gun was loaded and set on a timer to fire at an undetermined moment within the next hundred years.

The amazing thing was that people waited in lines to sit and stare into the shell's path! They all knew that the gun could go off at pointblank range at any moment, but they were gambling that the fatal blast wouldn't happen during their minute in the chair.

Yes, it was foolhardy, yet many people who wouldn't dream of sitting in that chair live a lifetime gambling that they can get away with sin. Foolishly they ignore the risk until the inevitable self-destruction. (Larson, 226)

Why gamble with your soul any longer? Why not let Jesus give you the victory over sin today?

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