

The Enemy Within

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Date: 19 October 2008

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[0:00] James 1, we'll read verses 12 through 15. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

When tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed.

Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. The Lord had an assignment for King Saul to go and to wipe out all the Amalekites and everything belonging to them.

He returns to the camp and the prophet Samuel says, What is this bleating of sheep in my ear and this lowing of cattle that I hear?

And Saul says, The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites. They spared the best of the sheep and the cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God. But we totally destroyed the rest.

[1:13] Aaron, the brother of Moses, is left to babysit the children of Israel for 40 days while Moses goes up into the mountain to receive the law. He is the one in charge now, Aaron.

And Moses comes down to find a golden calf and people worshipping and dancing around it. And he says, What's going on, Aaron? Do not be angry, my Lord.

You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.

So I told them, Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off. Then they gave me the gold. I threw it into the fire and out came this calf.

It's the people's fault. It's not my fault. It's the fire's fault. How was I to know what would come out of this fire? When you are tempted and fall into sin, whose fault is it?

[2:21] Few things are more common than blaming it on someone else. Now we've reached a new low in blame shifting when people with lung cancer sue cigarette manufacturers when it says on the package, smoking causes cancer.

What is it that drives blame shifting? That causes us to not stand and to take the blame to ourselves, but to point the finger at someone else and say, It's their fault, not mine.

It's that desire to polish our own reputation, to keep ourselves looking good in the eyes of others. So, nothing is more common.

We find it with the youngest of children. We have little ones, boys and girls, in the playgrounds. And maybe a boy hits a girl.

And he excuses himself by saying, But she hit me first. As if that absolves him of drawing a pint of blood from her nose.

[3:39] Blame shifting. Casting the blame to someone else rather than ourselves. And there's thousands of adult versions of the same. Now, this idea of blame shifting sinks to the lowest when we actually blame God for our sin.

And that's what we find here in James. We have God being blamed for sin. And the reason we all blame shift is because we have fallen Adamic natures.

We got it straight from our fathers. Our forefather Adam. In Genesis 3, God calls him on his first sin. Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?

And he says, The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it. So rather than assume responsibility for sin, he passes the buck to Eve and even worse than that, he points the finger at God.

Did you hear that in his response? The woman you put here with me gave me and I ate. In other words, he's saying, If you, God, had not put her with me here, I wouldn't have sinned.

[4:55] So it's really your fault after all and not mine. Now this blaming of God is more common than we may at first think. You know when we blame our personality.

I can't help it. It's just the way God made me. That's the personality he gave me. That's blaming God. When we blame our genes, when we blame our circumstances, we're blaming God. We're saying that if it wasn't these circumstances, if you hadn't put me in this situation, I wouldn't have been so run down and sinned. Trials and difficulties were so great that I couldn't help it, we say.

And so the God who governs all circumstances is blamed for our sins. Well, there were those in James' day who were saying that it was God's fault.

They were saying, God is tempting me. That was their very language. Whether outwardly or inwardly, they were blaming God. And James is going to shoot that line right out of the water with some big guns this morning.

[6:04] And he starts in in verse 13 by just saying, when tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me. Now first, a technical time out before we go on.

The Greek word here for tempting and tempted is the same word that is translated trials in verses 2 and verse 12.

Trials and temptations, as we've been saying, are simply two sides of the same coin. The same event has two sides to it. Something happens.

The economy crumbles. You get sick. You have some problem in your life. That is a trial from God to test your faith, to develop your perseverance, to perfect your holiness, and eventually to lead you to the crown of life.

But that same event is a temptation from Satan to destroy your faith, to get you to quit pursuing holiness, and instead to get you to sin, which eventually leads to death.

[7:14] Now God does tempt us with trials. He tempts us with trials, but He never tempts us to sin. God's aim in the test is always good.

There's no evil intent in Him. Satan's aim is always evil. So we can say of every circumstance we come into that God meant it for good while the devil meant it for evil.

When the trial and test is meant for good, we're viewing it as a trial from God. When it is viewed as something to get us to do sinful behaviors, it is viewed as a temptation from Satan.

Now, to this point in the book of James, we've been on the top side of this word, testing, perasmos. we've seen what God is up to in our trials, what He's doing for our good.

Today, we're going under. Today, James is going to take us to the bottom side of our trials, and he's going to show us that there's a whole other agenda to get us to sin.

[8:22] But he wants us to know right up front that no one should ever conclude from this that God is the one who tempts us to sin. When tempted, no one should say God is tempting me.

And translators get it right here when they translate the word tempted. When tempted, they should not say when tried. When tried, no one should say God is trying me.

No, that wouldn't be true. God does try us. And so here the word is referring to temptation, the solicitation to sin. And so it's correct that when tempted, no one should say God is tempting me. Perhaps the confusion to think that God tempts people to evil came by the two meanings of this word. And you find it in places, and sometimes it may be translated, that God tempted Abraham, Genesis 22.

Well, it means God tested Abraham, not that he solicited him to do evil, but sometimes perhaps the two meanings of this one word have caused this confusion to think God's tempting us to sin.

[9:32] Maybe it came from the Lord's prayer and that petition lead us not into temptation, that people think God is the one who tempts me. Maybe it's because God is sovereign over the whole trial temptation complex that we think, well, if God's in charge, then he really is tempting me here.

Or maybe it's just man's ingrained tendency to shift the blame and to say, well, it's God's fault. He's the one who tempted me. But for whatever the cause of their error, James destroys this idea by pointing to the character of God.

He points us right at his holiness. And later he points to his goodness in verse 17. That's another day. But notice his reasoning. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

There's two things here. First of all, God is so holy that it is impossible for him to be tempted by evil. There's nothing in his holy character to be attracted toward evil.

Sin is completely repulsive to God. His eyes are too pure to even look on sin with tolerance. He cannot tolerate wrong. His holiness consumes sin.

[10 : 47] A snowflake has a better chance of surviving on the surface of the sun than sin surviving in the presence of the holy, holy, holy God.

For God is light and in him there is no darkness, no none at all. His path unsullied light.

So he's too holy to have this association with sin in which he tempts others to sin. That would mean he finds some pleasure in it.

He can't be tempted by it. And the second thing is that nor does he tempt anyone else to sin. He's never out to entrap you, to entice you, to get you to sin.

Remember, he hates it. And so he does nothing to promote sin. He's too holy for that kind of work.

Now, God does work in our hearts, doesn't he, to cause us to obey God.

[11 : 50] God is mightily at work in us. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work with us. God works very much in our hearts to get us to obey God. But as Thomas Manton says, he doesn't even lift a finger to get us to disobey God.

He doesn't do anything to tempt us to sin. He's the avenger, not the author of sin. So, when you blame your sin on God, you're denying his holiness.

That's what James says. You're striking out at his holy character. So, when tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me.

Well, if you can't blame your sin on God, then who is to blame? You know, James doesn't even allow us to point the finger at Satan.

You won't read anything here. Later on, he'll talk about Satan in his letter, but not here. Rather, he says, verse 14, but each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed.

[13 : 01] You see, he won't let us escape responsibility. The root cause of sin is your own evil desire. The real culprit, your greatest enemy, is not out there.

He's in here. desire. It's your own evil desire. Those cravings, those appetites, those desires for anything contrary to God's will.

That's the reason you sin. Without these, that is, your evil desires, no temptation to sin would be able to harm you.

So it's because of your own evil desires you are dragged away and enticed. Now, James is using the language of fishing here. The language, the word entice means to be caught by bait.

It's a very fisherman's delight. Have you ever seen a fisherman's tackle box? It's filled with lures. Bait. What's a lure? It's hooks in costumes.

[14 : 05] Hooks dressed up to look like something that the fishy would just love to take a big bite of. And the lures are used to lure fish to allure them to sample and take a bite.

Have you thought what big deceivers fishermen are? I mean that. A good fisherman is a good liar. Now, this isn't a place to take up the ethical implications of fishing.

For your comfort fishermen, Jesus did tell Peter to cast in a line and catch a fish. Catch him by bait. Catch him by a snare.

But a fisherman lies with his lures. He uses deceit to catch fish. He's making the fish think that a bite of this would be satisfying and pleasurable and would be better off than to go without it.

When all the while, the bait is simply hiding a hook. And the truth of the matter is that if the fish does bite, he'll soon be frying in a skillet.

[15 : 18] The fisherman is deceiving the poor fish. His lures are playing on the fish's appetites. That's why a fisherman has so many lures in his box.

He's got to have something for each kind of fish. And maybe different times of day, they like different things. And so he's got to figure out what does that fishy down there want. And so he's got all of his arsenal of lures to try out on him.

So there's a big fish and he's minding his own business in the safety of the lily pads. And plop, down comes a line with a big pickle on it.

Now he might look at it just for the sound of the splash and may even say to his buddy, get a load of that. But he's not in the least attracted to bite on that line.

Why not? Because fish don't have an appetite. They don't have desire for pickles. The lure was worthless.

[16 : 28] But a while later, there's another plop. and now a juicy worm is dangling before his eyes. And the more he watches it dangle, the hungrier he gets.

And he begins to move out of the lily pads a bit and move closer. The more he thinks about it, the more he thinks how satisfying that worm looks.

And suddenly he strikes, he bites, he's dragged away, he's enticed. What's the cause of his being caught?

Well, you might say, well, it was the hook. After all, that's what got him. Or it was the bait. Or it was the skill of the fisherman. Perhaps all of these were involved in a secondary way.

But the activating cause of the fish being caught is his own desire for juicy worms. That's what got him. You know, if that fish hated worms, he'd never been caught.

[17 : 33] But because of his own desire for worms, he was lured out and enticed, caught by bait. And so the fish has only his own desires to blame for getting caught.

Do you know, it's the same way with you. It's exactly the same way with you. Satan is the father of lies. He's an expert fisherman who knows how to lay out the bait.

He's been at it for thousands of years. He's got his tackle box full of baits and lures that he's used and he's brought down kings.

He's conquered nations. But you know, he's only successful if he can stir up one of your own evil desires. Without that, he would fish all day and would catch nothing.

So again, our greatest problem is our own evil desires within. That's what leads us into sin. Or we might change the metaphor and say that temptation is like a huge powerful magnet swung over a scrap lot, a scrap yard.

[18 : 51] And there's a piece of metal lying on the ground and zap. It's drawn right up to that magnet.

There's a piece of pipe. There's a tin can. There's a bicycle. An old one. And up it goes. Once you kids throw your bikes away.

So here's a rubber ball. Same magnet passes by and nothing happens. Here's that powerful magnet. There's a rock lying there.

It doesn't move. It acts like nothing's gone on. What's going on here? The magnet only attracts the objects that have metal in them.

Temptation only attracts where there is evil desire in the heart. So don't blame God.

[19 : 53] Don't blame the devil. blame your own evil desires. James says. No metal. No attraction to the magnet.

No evil desires within. No temptation would ever catch you from without. You see, the problem is that there's something in me that wants what's being offered to me.

And that's where the blame! lies. Each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he's dragged away and enticed. The Apostle Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1 4 that the corruption in the world is caused by evil desires.

Never forget that as you look out and you see the corruption of the world around you. that it is through evil desires that this corruption exists.

It's not so much out there as it is in here. And John calls those evil desires the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

[21 : 02] 1 John 2 16. We desire the forbidden, we want what we see, we crave! the approval of others. Matthew Henry says the flame may come from outside, but the flammable material is on the inside.

And without that, the flame would do us no harm. So James says lay the blame for your sin at your own door, your own evil desires.

Now James doesn't stop there. He goes on to warn us about the whole chain reaction that is set in motion by evil desire. A chain reaction.

If this happens, this is going to happen. If that happens, this is going to happen. And he sets that whole chain reaction that starts out with evil desire. So he says in verse 15, when then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. Do you see the chain reaction? Do you see this progression?

[22 : 15] When inward evil desires hook up with outward temptations, that's not the end. That's just the beginning. It's the beginning of a whole process that ends in death.

So James is changing his imagery from fishing to pregnancy. He talks about conceiving, conception.

And when the seed and the egg meet and hook up, that's conception, that's pregnancy. And pregnancy inevitably leads to a birth, the birth of a baby.

And that's the sequence that James is following. Even so, after evil desire has conceived, after it's gained the consent of your will, and you give in to the temptation, something is going to happen after evil desire has conceived.

It is going to bring forth a baby, and the baby's name is sin. Actual sin, whether in thought, word, or deed.

[23 : 28] Breaking God's law. Example of it, someone mistreats you. They treat you unjustly. That's a trial from God, but it's also a temptation.

And the thought just passes through your mind how you might get even with them. What you might say or do, it just goes running right through your mind. You're being tempted, that is not sin.

Then you think about it again, and you say, bring that one back around again, and you begin to think how sweet it would be to get even. Revenge is sweet.

Now you have evil desire, you see, inside, that likes revenge, likes getting even, and at some point you say, I know I shouldn't, but, and at some point your will gives in.

That's pregnancy. That's conception. And it's just a matter of time now until you open your mouth and speak those nasty words or until you do that dastardly deed to get even with them.

[24 : 41] Sin is born. Sin has come forth into the world. Maybe the evil desire is for some sexual immorality that is going to give birth, my friend, to some partaking of forbidden fruit.

Maybe it's the evil desire for self-importance and that will give birth to the actual sin of putting others down, putting yourself first.

Maybe it's the evil desire of covetousness, of wanting that thing for yourself and it may lead you to the actual sin of shoplifting or stealing. Maybe the desire within is to escape punishment and so it will bring forth the baby lying and you'll lie to escape punishment.

But you see, whenever evil desire gets pregnant, it's going to give birth to sin. And it doesn't stop there either. For when sin grows up and is full grown, it too gives birth to a baby and that baby is called death.

That's where sin is going, whatever it may tell you to the contrary, Romans 6 21, the end of those things is death. So there's the process.

[26 : 04] there's the sequence, the chain reaction. You see it? Satan starts with temptation in which evil desire conceives and that leads to actual sins and that leads to death.

Have you noticed this sequence is exactly opposite of the earlier sequence that we saw in James 2 to 4? Remember there, it's the trial.

And it comes to test our faith. And that produces and develops perseverance. And that perfects holiness.

And that leads to the crown of life. Life, death. Two different sequences. The sequence of trials from God leads to life.

The sequence of temptation leads to death. death. And I say every day in every situation those two paths are waiting for you to walk.

[27 : 13] It's a trial. It's a temptation. Which will you respond to? So James is setting the course before us.

This sequence death. Of temptation. Evil desire conceives, gives birth to sin, gives birth to death.

By death, it's the opposite of the crown of life. It's eternal separation from God. It's eternal torments in hell. death. Well, it's the second death.

Sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. So there's a clear connection between sin and death.

It's not just in this passage, but it's found throughout the Bible, isn't it? The wages of sin is death.

The soul that sins, it shall surely die. This connection, you see, is inseparable. Only the death of Christ can break this connection between our sin and our deserved death and damnation.

[28 : 27] This evil desire is going to lead to sin, is going to lead to my death. The only thing that can break this connection is that Jesus would come and die my death for me and give me the life that he deserves.

And that's exactly the gospel. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He stepped in, took my death, and gave me his life. Otherwise, it would always be evil desire conceives, gives birth to sin, and it always gives birth to eternal death.

Bless God for Jesus, for his atoning sacrifice, the death of death, in the death of Christ, John Owen says. And that's God's answer to our problem with sin, that the Lord God would lay on him the iniquity of us all, and that he would crush him, that we might be made right with God and live forever, and receive that crown of life after we've been tried and passed the test.

We'll come now to some practical applications. since sin gives birth to death. The Puritan John Owen says, be killing sin or it will be killing you.

[29 : 52] We need to be sure of this. Sin aims at your death. It aims at your destruction, but it's the nature of temptation to hide the end, to hide the consequence when it's tempting you.

It hides the hook with the bait. And so the temptation does not say, you know, if you go this way, it's eventually going to lead you to hell.

No, it's all much more subtle than that. But you need to remind yourself of that. James is reminding us of that. That evil desire leads to sin and sin leads to death.

We need to remember the deadly hook of death. Peter says it this way in 1 Peter 2.11, abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.

They're out to kill your soul. They're out to damn your soul. It's a battle to the death. It's you or your sin that must die. It's kill or be killed. And so Paul says, put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, lusts, evil desires.

[31 : 06] Ah, that's what we're talking about here. These evil desires that lead to sin, that lead to death. Therefore, put the evil desires to death right back here. Better that sin die than me.

Oh, yes, the temptress may look good. Her beauty may be breathtaking. Her eyes may be captivating. Her words may drip with honey, but her house is the highway to hell.

Leading down to the chambers of death, and none who go to her return or attain the paths of life.

What is the Bible saying to us? Consider, consider where sin is taking you.

It's taking you to death. It's taking you to hell. So steep your soul in the truth, the truth that will help you uncover lies.

And we're going to see that later in chapter 1. James will show us that this word of truth is the law of liberty and sets us free from this way of death. But you see, it's the truth of God's word that will strip the mask off of every lie.

[32 : 12] It's saying this is the way to a better life when in reality it leads to death. Consider the hook beneath the bait.

Know God's word so that at the approach of temptation, temptation, you are able to say whatever it is telling you, you will be able to say here comes a nice looking lure, but it's merely a rusty hook playing Halloween.

It's all it is. It's death dressed up as if it would lead to life. James means for death and damnation to be a deterrent to sin.

That's why we read in our Bible sin when it is full grown gives birth to death. Because James knows that we're not always thinking of the consequence of our action when we enter into it.

We're thinking of the present pleasure. And so James says no, no, no, no. You need to see where this sequence is going. So that's the first lesson.

[33 : 18] Secondly, we must keep a careful watch then over our desires. Our desires. Some people only concern themselves with outward sins. if I can keep from murdering my neighbor, I feel like I've kept the law, the sixth commandment.

If I can stay out of bed with my neighbor's wife, then I feel like I've kept the seventh commandment. And if I can keep from actually taking something that's not mine, then I've kept the eighth commandment.

And so they give little thought as to what desires are found in their hearts, just so long as the outward actions are not in the gutter.

But James reminds us that the whole process that leads to sin and death starts with an evil desire.

That ups the ante on guarding our hearts, about observing our hearts and seeing what desires are lurking in there.

What desires are powerful and strong and growing? What desires are ruling and reigning in my life? Don't treat desire.

[34 : 32] It may look harmless and innocent. I guarantee you it's not, says James. It leads to sin that leads to damnation. So we must fight the battle at the level of evil desires, James says.

Put to death evil desires, Paul says in Colossians 3, 5. With sin, we must treat it sooner rather than later.

A fire that can be easily contained at first. Maybe you start a little fire to burn the fence row and you're keeping it nice and small where you can, with a shovel, keep control of it.

But that can easily turn into a consuming forest fire and destroy thousands of acres. When's the best time to contain the fire? It's when it's just sparked. Get it then.

Lest you find yourself dealing with a forest on fire. Stage 1 cancer is easier to treat when it's still located in one place than when it is developed to stage 4 and spread throughout your whole body.

[35 : 41] Where do we fight sin? How soon do we attack it? Sometimes we treat evil desires as if they're innocent little things. That would be like you looking at a little viper egg, little snake egg, and it's poisonous snake in there.

And yet, when the egg cracks and that little wormy thing comes out, you say, oh, how cute. Do you know that all the poison to kill you is in that little snake?

Do you know that all the poison to kill you and to send you to hell is in that evil desire? And if it conceives and gives birth to sin, it will give birth to death.

So stomp on the egg before it hatches. Give it when it's young, before it's full grown into this viper. And you can't control it.

Weeds left unchecked will soon take over the garden. Even so, unchecked, evil desires will soon take over the soul. So at the first risings of sinful desire, you must rise up and kill them.

[37 : 01] James is correcting this idea that we can flirt with temptation and be no worse off because of it.

You know, the longer you look at the forbidden object, the stronger the desire within you grows. The longer we toy with the idea of sin, the longer we toy with getting revenge and we run that back around again, the stronger our evil desire for revenge is growing.

We're feeding it, you see. The whole dynamic of dealing with sin is way off base in many circles where they actually tell their young people to go out and to sow their wild oats as if by sowing them they'll get it out of their system and then they settle down and live a moral life.

No, the Bible says just the opposite. Evil desires are not satisfied by feeding them, they're strengthened, they grow. and that's why you must starve your evil desires.

You mustn't give them a crumb. You must make no provision for the lust of the flesh to fulfill it in its desires. Because desires will grow stronger.

[38 : 23] Men, you must learn to bounce your eyes away from forbidden lust, things that stir your lust. You must learn what it is to bounce your eye. It's the lingering look. It's the second look that will kill you.

deal with desire in its initial stages. And so I ask you, are you allowing any sinful desires just to go unchecked?

Because after all, they haven't broken out yet. They're just desires. They're just things on the inside. Anyone toying with temptation? Anybody playing with fire in your lap? Evil desires are like buckets of gunpowder strapped to your chest.

how close do you want to get to flying sparks? Well, if you know your heart, brother or sister, you know that it's full of the gunpowder of evil desires, and you don't want to get that heart close to the sparks of temptation.

And so you deal with the occasions for sin. You avoid known occasions for sin. If you can't hang out with friends without laughing at their off-color jokes, and find some new friends.

[39 : 36] If dating that person leads you to compromise your sexual purity, then find another date. If being online lures you into pornography, then stay offline.

And you say, John, that's awful radical, don't you think? And the Son of God was standing on a mountain one day, and he says, if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. And if your right foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better to enter into heaven with one eye than to enter into hell with two.

Better to go to heaven with one hand than to go into heaven with two. You know what he's saying? It's better to have never been online and to be in heaven.

than to have gone online and end up in hell. It's better to have never dated and to end up in heaven than to have dated and fallen into sexual immorality that leads you to hell.

[40:48] So deal with the sin early and deal with it severely. The Lord Jesus would say, and his younger brother in the flesh, James, is coming behind him and saying the same thing.

If we really understand the danger of our evil desires, we must be dead serious about mortifying them, starving them out.

Third, keep your desires fixed and fed on Christ. John Piper says, sin is what we do when we're not satisfied with Christ. Sin is what we do when our desires are not satisfied with Christ.

When desire for him is growing, we find desire for sin diminishing. So any waning of desire for Christ should be treated seriously. It should alarm us. It should be a warning siren in our ears.

I am in a dangerous position when my desire for Christ is dead cold or cooling even. So how's your heart? How's that desire for Christ?

[41:53] Is it like David when he says, like the deer panting after the water brook, so pants my heart for thee, O God? That's what we've got to aim for.

That's what we've got to keep our heart at that pitch. Then sin's desires will be low. The more we look on the one who is altogether lovely, the more our desire for him will grow and it will weaken evil desires.

So watch out for anything that weakens your desire for Christ. Too much candy can spoil your appetite for a healthy supper. Too much of the world can spoil your appetite for Christ and holiness. Too many ball games, too much chatting and texting, too much shopping can all be the reason for too little feasting on Christ. Strengthening the desires after him and weakening our evil desires. desires. And lastly, James' diagnosis of our condition you see is far more withering and humbling than many are prepared to deal with.

[43:02] Because he's telling us that the seeds of every sin are present in our hearts right now in the form of evil desires. The seeds of every sin, they're right there in our evil desires.

And those evil desires reign in the unbeliever and they remain in the believer. Ephesians 2, 3, Paul says, All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of the flesh and following its desires.

We just fell in line with whatever the evil desire was. It's the way we lived. We didn't have any new heart that desired anything contrary. We didn't have the Holy Spirit to war against the flesh.

An unbeliever, that's your condition here this morning. If you're outside of Christ, all you've got in your heart are evil desires. There is nothing in you that is good in the eyes of God.

There is no defense mechanism to keep you from those evil desires becoming impregnated and giving birth to sin and that giving birth to death.

[44:08] You see, the answer is the gospel. You need Christ to give you a new heart, to put his spirit inside of you, to make you right with God, to give you his righteousness, to give you a spirit to war against the flesh.

And believers, your need for the Lord Jesus is still the same. Yes, you have a new heart with new desires, but it's not a perfect heart. Yes, evil desires have been dethroned.

They no longer reign, but they remain. Indwelling sin, evil desires within. And those evil desires are stronger than we may realize.

Left to ourselves, James says, they will conceive and bring forth sin that results in death. And the real, the truth of the matter is that we have no power to stop that chain reaction from happening.

Left to ourselves, that is going to happen with me. My evil desires are going to give birth to sin and that's going to lead me to hell. Me, left to myself, even with a new heart, left to myself.

[45:17] I need, I need Christ today. I need his spirit today. I need fresh infusions of grace today from the Holy Spirit to keep me from feeding evil desires, to put evil desires to death.

We are incapable of not sinning apart from supernatural grace. God himself must interrupt this chain reaction or else I end in death.

Do I believe that? That will make a huge difference in the way I deal with temptation. And so Paul says in Romans 8, 12 and 13, if you live according to the flesh, those evil desires, you will die.

But if through the spirit we put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. And so the two paths are ever stretching out before you in every situation, in life.

There's the trial that would test your faith, that would build perseverance and perfect your holiness and lead to life. And yet that same situation, there is an agenda to get your evil desires to hitch up with your will and to conceive, to bring forth sin that will lead to death.

[46:33] death. I don't want to take another step. I don't want to go another day.

I don't want to go another moment in that kind of scenario without seeking the help of God. death. So I must not only watch, but I must pray.

Watch and pray so that you enter not into temptation because prayer brings God into the field of battle. Prayer unleashes the power of the spirit to war against evil desire.

So I pray. I pray for wisdom to see my temptation for what it really is, just another path to hell. And I bring my sins to Jesus for the killing of them.

I ask him to help me starve my evil desires. I ask him to so ravish me with desires for him that sin will look distasteful to me.

[47:31] The answer for our problem of evil desires is the gospel. You see, it's God coming to us and saving us from our sins. But we need to get to him.

That's it. Power to live a new life is found in union with the risen Christ. It's in him that we are more than conquerors. So James does not let us escape responsibility for our own sins, but he goes further and he warns us of our real danger.

And that is those evil desires within. That we give birth to sin and that we give birth to death. You see what he's doing? He's making us despair of any hope of you know, I can handle this Christian life.

I can handle temptation. No, he's saying, no, you can't. These evil desires will lead you to hell. Oh, what's he wanting to? He's wanting to chase us to Jesus for the killing of our sins, for the weakening of our evil desires, for pardon and for power.

It all flows from Christ. Without him, I can do nothing, but I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. I can say no to temptation.

[48:43] I can grow stronger through temptation. My holiness can prosper through going through a time of temptation because Christ is mine and I am his.

Let's pray. Our God, we thank you for driving us to that grace again, even to our Savior who's full of grace and truth. Oh, forgive us for all of our sins.

Forgive us for toying with temptation, for leaving evil desires unchecked. And fill us with grace to take up the battle and to be strengthened in our temptations.

Make us stronger Christians because we've been through the battle. But keep us from falling. And thank you that you are able to do just that.

Almighty Lord Jesus, keep us from falling. Present us faultless before your presence with great joy. And we'll give you all praise and honor in Jesus' name. Amen.

[49:50] Amen.