

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: James 1:13-15

***"Choose Life!" (part 2)***

**TWO CHOICES**

We have been talking about the freedom God has given us to make choices for our lives. How everything boils down to the question? "Do we choose God's way or our own, do we choose to obey God's law or our own feelings, do we trust in Jesus or someone else? Throughout God's Word, the call is given to mankind to turn back to His Creator and this involves a choice. In fact, God said to Moses and the people of Israel in **Dt. 30:19-20**, ***"I have set before you this day life and death, blessing and curse, therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live."*** I believe this is still true to this day.

We know now since the coming of Jesus that the choice now includes trusting in God the Son, Jesus Christ who said, ***I am the way the truth and the life.*** Blessing and life and eternal life are found in Him alone.

But why do so many fail to make the right choice? One word - temptation. The temptation to sin is simply the option of taking the easy way out or the pleasurable way out even though it is the bad way out. And human nature is like water in that we have the tendency to take the path of least resistance.

And who is the tempter? Satan. There is a devil. I believe it, because Jesus spoke more about Satan than anyone else in Scripture. He is our enemy and the chief means that he gets people off the way of life is through Temptation. **1 Peter 5:8,9** says ***"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. <sup>10</sup>After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.***

We will all do battle with the devil and his minions (fallen angels/demons) and the way he goes about his work is primarily in the area of temptation. Now if we are going to beat the devil at his game, then we need to understand how temptation works.

**THE TEMPTATION TO SIN**

Please turn to the book of **James 1:13-15**: ***"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 sin when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."***

Now I want us to notice three points when it comes to temptation:

**THE DEFINITE CERTAINTY**

First, there's the definite certainty of temptation. ***"Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being by God."*** Note the phrase, ***when he is tempted.*** It doesn't say if he is tempted. It says *when* he is tempted.

That means it's going to happen. You can count on it. Every one of us will be tempted to sin. Some may say, "Not me, I'm a Christian." Doesn't matter! **Hebrews 4:15** tells us that even ***"Jesus was tempted in all things as we are, yet He did not sin..."*** No one is immune to temptation because you're a Christian, to the contrary, the temptations will increase, they will not decrease.

The truth is the minute you become a friend of God you become an enemy of Satan. I am reminded of the story of a Christian man, named Bill, who worked for a boss who could care less about the things of God. Bill's boss was a cussing unbeliever and a hard task master. Bill was fairly young in the Lord. He would often admit to his boss that he seemed to be always facing temptation and that he knew the devil as after him.

The boss didn't buy it, though. One day while they were out duck hunting, the boss said to him, Bill, you're a strange preacher. You claim to be a Christian and yet you're always talking about wrestling with temptation, and the devil always being after you. He said, I'm not even a Christian, I make no pretense of being a Christian. And the devil never bothers me, how do you explain that?

Bill said, well, Boss, suppose we shoot two ducks. One of them falls dead and the other is still flopping in the water. Which one are we going to go after first. Well, he said, the one that's still flopping. He said, that's right boss, the devil knows you as a dead duck. The devil doesn't have to worry about you. He's already got you, you're dead. But if the devil's after you it's a sign of life.

And so if you are following the Lord, you are going to be especially tempted because now you know what's wrong. You can see it. You can feel it. But I'll tell you what the good news is, as the strength of the temptations increase the power of God in you to overcome the temptation will increase. But will you have to lean on God even more. That's the choice, isn't it?

So there is the definite certainty - temptation will come to all of us, often. But now I want us to see the divine impossibility of temptation.

### **THE DIVINE IMPOSSIBILITY**

*"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone with evil."* Did you catch that?

God will not cannot and does not tempt us with evil because God cannot be tempted with evil. It is absolutely impossible for God to do any tempting. You see, man by nature wants to blame his sin on God. Do you remember what happened in the Garden of Eden? After Adam sinned, God came walking in the midst of the Garden and confronted him about his sin. Do you remember Adam's little neat alibi? Adam said, "The woman that you gave me! She gave me the fruit to eat. In other words, Adam was saying, "Now, really God, it wasn't my fault. It was the woman *you* gave me." Now, that sounded pretty good. It really is not my fault. I'm not really guilty God. You did it to me, you placed me in this situation.

Someone has said that God blamed Adam. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent and the serpent didn't have a leg to stand on. Well, let me tell you something, friend, Adam was the one who didn't have a leg to stand on. Adam wanted to blame God. He just wanted to make it look like, well, it's, it's just circumstances, it's just my environment. Something went wrong.

But a lot of what we call the alibi and the excuses for sin are really just blaming our sin on God. Now most people don't just come out and say God made me sin. No, they're more clever than that. They have sort of a disguised way of saying that God tempted me and that it was devil. They think ultimately it is really God's fault because he made the world we are in and He allowed the devil to tempt us.

But now James is just going to pull the rug out from underneath you if you're trying to blame God. He says, now, they're two things that are impossible. Number one, it's impossible for God to be tempted with evil, You can't tempt God with evil. The devil can't dangle any bait in front of God that God is going to go after. Why? Because God has it all. There's nothing God needs, there's nothing God wants. He is sufficient in himself and God has no itch the devil can

scratch and God is completely whole.

But not only is God completely whole, God is completely holy. He is the antithesis of sin. It is absolutely impossible that God could be tempted. Someone says, well, now, wait a minute, wasn't Jesus tempted and wasn't Jesus God? Yes, Jesus was tempted and Jesus was God but Jesus was also man. Jesus shared our humanity and in his humanity, Jesus was tempted but in his deity, Jesus was without sin. God in his essence, in his divine nature as God, cannot be tempted with evil. And also God cannot tempt with evil.

But what happens when people get comfortable with their sin? They want others to join them, don't they? There's something about sin that makes a person want to share it. Have you ever noticed how those who drink will try to get others to drink. Those who smoke try to get others to smoke. Those who commit immorality, they try to get other to do it. This is why Satan tried to induce Eve to sin because he was a sinner. He had, he has a product that he wants to export. Well, the product that God exports is Godliness and God does not tempt people to sin. And so no one can say God tempted me.

You see, if you could say God tempted you, then you would have a perfect alibi, a perfect excuse cause who can fight God. I mean, every, everything God does, he does well. And so if, if God places you in a situation, that is beyond your strength whatever, then you are able to blame God.

Now, we, we're still doing this today. We don't say the woman who you gave me. Instead we say, it is because of my parents or how I was raised or a lack of opportunity. We somehow want to still blame God. And what do we find in psychology books today? Man is not evil, he's just ill. Man is not sinful, he's just sick. It's not really his fault. It's something that just happened to him. And so man is still saying to God, "God the woman you me, the background you gave me, the parents you gave me, the body you gave me, the environment you gave me, that's why I am the way I am." But God won't buy it friend. There's one thing that God will never accept for sin and that is an alibi. God tempts no man with evil, neither can he be tempted with evil.

But, oh, how we are good at making excuses. You ask a man, "Say, why do you drink?" He says, why do I drink, man, I drink because my wife nags me all the time. It's the only escape. Nag, nag, nag, nag, nag, that's why I drink. Then you ask her, why do you nag him all the time? Nag him, why wouldn't I? Drink, drink, drink, drink, drink, that's all he ever does.

Everybody can give reason for why they do everything, rather than say it's me, it's me, it's me, oh God, and I need your help. There is the definite certainty that you're going to be tempted. There is a divine impossibility that God can be tempted with evil or that God will tempt you with evil.

### **THE DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY**

Now, the third thing and the most important thing that I want us to see this morning is the direct responsibility. Her James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit puts the responsibility for sin right directly where it belongs.

Look now at **verse 14**, "*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 sin when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*"

What is this direct responsibility? It is our choice. Sin is an inside job. Do you understand that? It's not something that happens from without. It is something that happens primarily within. James removes the alibi doesn't he? You can't even say the devil made me do it. You're going to have to say, I did it all by myself with just a little help from my friends.

And James illustrates it by an immoral woman seducing a man or by an immoral man seducing a woman. Now,

he's not just merely talking about sexual sin. He's not merely talking about the sin of adultery and fornication and immorality. But he is using that kind of a sin as an illustration of all kinds of sin. There's a certain seductiveness to sin. Now, this word drawn away is a word that is a fisherman's word. That's literally what the word means, in the original language. It is a term that would describe a fisher who catches a fish by using a special bait.

You can see the progression here. First, there's the courtship, yes, the courtship. The devil comes along, and he sort of courts you, he sort of tantalizes you with a sin. He dangles the bait in front of you. It may be lust, it may be pride, it may be envy, it may be dishonesty, it may be revenge, it may be laziness, you name it, any one of a myriad number of sins. That's the courtship.

But then there is the consent. The courtship is the word carried or drawn away but the consent is the word enticed. It literally means trapped. You have taken the bait and you are trapped! You see, there's no sin yet when the bait is dangled. It's not a sin for Satan to cast a lure out in front of you. While you can't keep the devil from casting temptations in front of you, there comes a time when you consent to that temptation and then when you do the hook is set. You say, I will and an unholy marriage takes place. So down the aisle comes a desire, an unholy desire and coming from the other side comes the will and Satan the devil presides over that ceremony. When the lust and the will agree, when the will says I do to the lust, then a marriage, an unholy marriage takes place.

After the courtship, and the consent, there is the conception! Because out of this marriage, there comes a child. Look at it, again: ***"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 sin when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."***

Now he's talking about an unholy marriage here that produces an unholy child. And the child of lust and the will is sin. And you know, at first it doesn't seem bad at all. I mean, after all when a baby is born, it's usually a happy time. You see most unbelievers people are pretty proud of their sin. They say, oh, what a beautiful baby. Oh, this is wonderful. And they have a good time.

And sometimes we in the church make the mistake of telling our young people that there's no fun or pleasure in sin. That's ridiculous. Listen, there are folks out there living in sin having the time of their life. There's pleasure in sin. The bible speaks of the pleasures of sin. And when the lust and the will consent and there's a conception and a baby is born and that sin is fun. They say, wow, this is great, what a beautiful baby. But the Bible also says that ***the pleasures of sin are but for season***. Don't forget that. We can't forget that, But, for season.

You see, the devil is too smart to go fishing without any bait on his hook. A man was walking down the road one time and he had a basket on his arm and in that basket he had some pods of beans and he was dropping them out on the ground and there was a herd of swine following along gobbling up those beans and someone said, Mister, that's a strange way to feed your pigs. Oh, he said, I'm not feeding them. This is the way I take them to the slaughter house.

The devil has a basket on his arm and in it are the pleasures of sin. There first all is the courtship. He just dangles it in front of you. Then, after the courtship there's the consent, when the will says I do, and after the consent, there is the conception, an unholy union of the will and the lust and a child is born. And the name of that child is sin. Oh, but it's not finished yet. I want you to see, not only the courtship and the consent and the conception. I want you to see the completion. You see, that's where we fail to understand. Look at the completion if you will here in this verse of scripture. And it says, and, and when lust has conceived it brings forth sin and sin when it is finished, death. The completion. You see, you need to see the finished product of the devil's aim. The reason that some people don't defeat sin is they don't look far enough ahead. They don't see sin when it is finished. You need to see the total product. Someone has said, "You can eat the devil's corn if you want to, but he'll choke you on the cob." It is the freedom we all have. We are given the choice. What will you choose? That's the question. And the Bible says: Don't give in! Say no to temptation, say no to the flesh, say no to the world, say no to the devil and say YES to Christ! That's the only way you are going to win. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!