Tested, Not Tempted:
Where Temptation Really Comes From

James 1:13-18

Key Thoughts

1. **God tests; He never tempts.** In 1611 "tempt" first meant to put something to the proof, which is why the KJV says God tempted Abraham where the NKJV says He tested him. God tests His people to approve them, but He entices no one to sin, and He does not change.
2. **Jesus was enticed by nothing.** The Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tested and approved, and when the tempter came, Jesus answered every offer with Scripture. As the Holy Spirit conforms us to His image, we are enticed by less and less.
3. **The same trial, two intentions.** God sees every trial as an opportunity to prove His people genuine and make them perfect and complete. The enemy sees the same trial as an opportunity to entice us into sin, just as he hoped Job would curse God to His face.
4. **Temptation works through our own desire.** Each one is tempted, and the enemy aims at whatever works on us. Temptation is not sin, but desire entertained long enough conceives sin, and sin allowed to grow brings forth death, as it did with Cain.
5. **Do not be deceived: God's gifts are good, and He does not change.** A desire that does not align with God is not a good gift, and He will never be okay with our sin. Of His own will He gave us new birth through the word of truth, making us firstfruits of what He will one day restore.

Discussion Questions

1. Read James 1:13 alongside Genesis 22:1. Why does it matter that God tests His people but never tempts them? What does this example teach us about why we study the Bible and not just read it?
2. Read Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus answered every temptation with Scripture. Is there a temptation that once had a strong pull on you but has less power now? What has the Holy Spirit changed in you?
3. Read Job 1:8-11 and James 1:2-4. God and Satan looked at the same trial and saw two different things. Think of a trial you are facing now. What might God intend to grow in you, and how might the enemy want to use it against you?
4. Read James 1:14. The enemy aims at what works on us, often when we are hungry, tired, or discouraged. What are your trigger points, and when are you most vulnerable to being drawn away?
5. Read Genesis 4:4-8 and James 1:15. Temptation is not sin, but Cain let his anger grow until it became murder. Where have you let a desire or a grievance grow when you should have ruled over it, and what would it look like to deal with it now?
6. Read James 1:16-18 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. If every good gift comes from a Father who does not change, and He has given you new birth, how should that change the way you weigh the desires that seem good to you?

Applications

1. **Name your trigger points.** Write down the desires and situations that most often draw you away. Pray over that list every day this week, and choose one Scripture to answer each, the way Jesus did.
2. **Stop it before it grows.** When you feel a desire starting to pull at you this week, don't entertain it. Name it, bring it to God right away, and walk away before it has time to become sin.
3. **Thank the Giver.** Each day this week, name one good gift from your Father and thank Him for it, remembering that He does not change.

Closing Prayer

Father of lights, every good gift and every perfect gift comes from You, and with You there is no variation or shadow of turning. Thank You that You test us to approve us, and never to destroy us. Forgive us for blaming You for what our own desires have done. Show us where we are being drawn away, and give us the strength to rule over sin while it is still at the door. Make us like Jesus, who answered every temptation with Your Word, and keep us from being deceived. Thank You that of Your own will You brought us forth by the word of truth. Let us live as those who are alive in Christ, free and not enslaved, until the day there is no more curse and Your servants serve You face to face. In Jesus' name, amen.