

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 3 “Enduring Temptation”

Read for this week’s study

James 1:12–21; Ps. 119:11; Gen. 3:1–6; Titus 3:5–7; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22.

Memory Text

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Root of Temptation
- III. When Lust Conceives
- IV. Every Good and Perfect Gift
- V. Slow to Speak
- VI. Saved by Receiving
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

JAMES 1:12-21

A. Prize for Endurance (1:12)

1. Our society highly values popularity and acquisitions. Why does James 1 give priority to the development of a strong character?
2. God promises to give the crown of life or the living crown (*stephanos*) to those who love Him. Who else according to the New Testament will be recipients of the same reward?
3. Name a few Bible characters whose stories you find most encouraging in times of prolonged trials.

B. The Process of Temptation (1:13-18)

1. Distinction between right and wrong is the basis of biblical wisdom. What’s happening today to our sense about what is right and what is wrong?
2. We tend to blame others, our human nature, the devil, and even God for our sins. Why do we do this?

3. Where does sin come from according to this passage? How can our knowing sin's origin help us in our struggle with sin?
4. Why is it important to make a clear separation between temptation and sin?
5. Through the word of truth the eternal God can make us into the first-fruit of all that He created. Who else is referred to as "first-fruit" in the Bible and why? (1 Corinthians 15:20).
6. Do you agree with the statements that sin is "always our own choice" and this is why we are "condemned for doing it"?

C. Hearers of the Word (1:19-21)

1. How many among us are actively practicing the art of listening and responding thoughtfully to what we hear?
2. Very few people have repented of keeping silence. Can silence speak as powerfully as words do?
3. "Problems arise when we stop listening to God and to each other." Was this the problem that Cain had according to Genesis 4?
4. It is important to think before we speak. What was the Psalmist's prayer in this regard? (Psalm 141:3)

**You cannot keep *birds* from flying over your head,
but you can keep them from *building a nest* in your hair.
(M. Luther)**

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

LV: There's another phrase in here that raises questions many times. I've wondered about this myself. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," what are we really praying? Does that imply, have you ever wondered about this, "God, be careful; please don't get me into temptation?" That God would really want to do that?

AGM: Well one thing that helps is, the word "temptation" means trial or testing. Some versions have, "Lead us not into hard testing." The idea that God would tempt is unthinkable as our Heavenly Father. Remember James deals with this. That when we're tempted, don't even blame the devil. He says, "You are led away by your own lusts and enticements." Certainly don't blame God. He wouldn't do any such thing. So "Lead us not into temptation" cannot mean, "Please, don't You tempt us." But "Lead us not into testing," Jesus prayed that in Gethsemane. He said, "Remove this cup from Me, if possible." I don't think we should pray, "Lord, I'm ready for it. Bring on the trials; I feel very strong today." I believe we should say, "Lord, in all humility, I mean bring me not into trial; nevertheless, Thy will be done." I think, "Lead us not into

testing” must be coupled with, “Nevertheless, Thy will be done.” Jesus did it in Gethsemane, and we do it in the Lord’s Prayer. You know, the Lord’s Prayer and the prayer in Gethsemane are very similar in a number of respects. “Lead us not into testing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, Thy will be done.” So I think the prayer in Gethsemane helps understand the Lord’s Prayer. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 15 with Lou Venden, “Talking to God as A Friend” recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>

And surely you’ve used, as I have many times, the story of that most popular of all negative proponents of perfection, Simeon. Simeon was a member of the church in Antioch and he wanted to be perfect. He read Matthew 5:48, but he felt tempted all the time. And he thought that if he could separate himself from temptation a little more he could lead a more perfect life. So when he could afford to he put his house in order, bought materials and built a little pillar, climbed up on top, and things were somewhat improved, but still too close—sin was pressing in. So he got more material. Finally his tower was 60 feet tall. And he climbed up on top and sat there for thirty years until he died.

You think of all the bad things that Simeon was not able to do. He never went to a ball game on Sabbath. Never went dancing. Never went to the saloon. Way up there he sat in saintly isolation.

The other members in the church envied him and as soon as they could afford to they built pillars all around. Pretty soon the church was perched on these pillars. In fact they became known as the order of the Stilites (stilus is a pillar). They became known as St. Simeon’s Stilites, and if you look in the encyclopedias you’ll find it was a whole church order. The order of these hermits known as the Stilites people.

Can you imagine 4 million Adventists perched on pillars waiting for the Lord to come? Absolutely useless, of course. What’s the use of trying evangelism 60 feet up like that? It would be no good. And yet to this day is not this negative approach very popular? And I think the devil loves it because it puts God in such a bad light. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation – Perfection, Requirement or Generous Offer? Recorded December, 1983, San Diego, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:* <http://pkp.cc/perfect> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/perfect> (Part 2)

Now it’s said here that this measure of faith is a sign by God in verse 3. Would you understand that to mean that God looks over the human race and says, “I’ll give that one so much faith and this one so much.”

Is faith a gift of God? Is that why some have faith and some don't? He's given it to some and not to others? If God gives faith, why do some have it and some don't? And does He give more to some than to others? Does He practice favoritism here? Can faith actually be given? You say to God,

"I don't trust you. I think you're an absolutely untrustworthy liar as the devil has said, but I wish I trusted you and thought you told the truth. I'm praying that when I wake up in the morning I will trust you and not think you're a liar anymore."

You hop into bed, wake up in the morning, you love, trust and admire God, you now know He tells the truth. Would you trust that? Can God give us faith as an outright gift? And yet, if God had not given us the capacity to reason and to weigh evidence and to discern between the true and the false, if God had not given us the capacity to make decisions and commitments, if God had not given us the revelation of the truth about Himself at such cost, if God did not preserve us from the enemy who would destroy us and confuse us and take away our chance to weigh the evidence, in fact, if God has not done all that He has done would there be any chance that we could see Him as He is and trust Him? In fact, who even instructs us and works with us and persuades us, and tries to lead us to truth and conviction? Aren't all these things the work of God and the work of the Holy Spirit? Is there anything, though, that God doesn't do in the matter of faith? Does He also cast our vote? Does God not only bring the evidence but also force our vote? If God has forced our vote then He's won the great controversy by stuffing the ballot box, hasn't He? He really hasn't won our vote. As Ellen White says repeatedly, our vote is offered in the highest sense of freedom. The vote is ours.

So God gives us every opportunity to have faith, but the decision to trust it is left with us. And many religions don't like that. They don't want anything left with us. But if it isn't left with us, how are we held accountable in the judgment? Are we not judged as to whether or not we've chosen to place our faith in the true God?

Isn't that the only thing we're held responsible for? The decision is ours, or else our trust in God would mean nothing to Him, would it? If He had manipulated us so that we trusted Him, I mean, if our wives said they loved us because we had manipulated them, we'd be talking back to ourselves. Does God just want to hear Himself talking back, I love you God? Or does He want to hear us say in the highest sense of freedom we do love and trust you, that's our choice. Hasn't He paid a heavy price to preserve our freedom to cast our own vote in the great controversy? And to love Him because we've decided He's lovable and trustworthy. And I think it's so cruel of many religions to suggest that even faith is not our decision. God does all of that. Yes, He brings everything to us. Without Him there'd be no chance to exercise faith. But the decision, the vote is ours, and for that we're held responsible.

In fact, one other place I might have brought, Ellen White says if the Holy Spirit should be poured out on you with a hundred fold greater intensity, it would not make of you a Christian. The Spirit only leads to truth, leads us to conviction, but at the same time preserves our freedom to vote no. So when it says faith is a gift of God, I think we have to reserve that one act that is assigned to us is the decision whether we're going to respond to the evidence with trust or rebellion and distrust. What do you think? Would you have questions about that? Why all the costly revelation these thousands of years and all the records of Scripture that we might have the evidence if God is the one who places faith in our hearts anyway whether we have evidence or not? See, if God just says, "Now you don't trust me, now you do" why do you need any evidence? The fact that God has been such a teacher and has brought us so much evidence is clear support that He'll bring us every opportunity; He'll preserve our lives to give us those moments of freedom when we cast our vote. But casting that vote is our privilege, our responsibility; He's created us capable of voting, and holds us responsible for the vote that we cast. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 12, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/23MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Now, what happens when we are fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit? We have phrases that sometimes describe this, such as "Let go and let God". It all depends on what that means. That can mean all kinds of things! But do we eventually completely surrender our self-control to God's control, and now He runs us day by day? Is that what we desire? Well, it's so interesting in this list of the fruits of the Spirit. If one is led by the Spirit he will have all those good things mentioned until you come to the last one, translated in the *King James*, "temperance". Do you have temperance in your version? You know temperance is something the Women's Christian Temperance Union promoted through the years, and gave temperance a certain understanding. It's abstinence from liquor, tobacco, narcotics, and moderation in all other things. But is that what Paul has in mind? What do you have in your version for the last of the fruits of the Spirit? Self-control? Anything else? Do they all agree, self-control? It might be self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And that's exactly what the Greek word is. If I were to put it on the board, it's, well it's hard to put it quite into the English letters. Maybe I'll just pronounce it *enkrateia*. The "en" is "in"-inside, and "*krateia*" is the root for democrat; the rule of the people. Aristocrat; the rule of the few. Autocrat, and so on. So *enkrateia* means exercising power, or rule, inside. And that's the word for self-control.

Now, think what that says about God—that when we have come completely under His saving and healing power, we have not given up self-control; we have recovered it. Now, is that tyranny? God's desire is not to run us all, like robots. God's desire is to lead us to the place

where we will responsibly and reliably and consistently exercise self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And hasn't it cost God a great deal to give us back our self-control? If He hadn't given us this power in the beginning there wouldn't have been the revolt in His universe. So I think the fruits of the Spirit are so significant that it ends with God's ultimate goal for us, that when we come into full harmony with His ideal for us, we have recovered the dignity of self-mastery and self-control.

God doesn't want us to say we love Him because we're so completely under His control we can't say anything else. I mean, God doesn't want to be talking to Himself, when we tell Him that we admire Him. He wants that to be our own conviction. And the Spirit, working through truth and evidence leads us to the place where some of us, in the highest sense of freedom, say, "Yes, we trust, love, and admire You." He doesn't want to hear the Spirit telling Him that. He wants to hear His children saying it, and really meaning it themselves. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982 Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ had been sent to earth to represent God in character. Jesus was the Life giver, the Teacher sent of God to provide salvation for a lost world, and to save men in spite of all Satan's temptations and lying deceptions. He himself was the gospel. In his teachings he clearly presented the great plan devised for the redemption of the race. Divinity had united with humanity for the purpose of uniting humanity with divinity, that through Christ man might become a partaker of the divine nature. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." {RH, July 7, 1896 par. 5}

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God's purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. The soul, corrupted and deformed, is to be purified, transformed, that it may be clothed in "the beauty of the Lord our God," "conformed to the image of His Son." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Psalm 90:17; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 2:9. Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God's image, may attain. {MB 60.3}

God in His great love is seeking to develop in us the precious graces of His Spirit. He permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience and

advances us in the work of character building. The soul that through divine power resists temptation reveals to the world and to the heavenly universe the efficiency of the grace of Christ. {MB 117.1}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." [John 14:6.] "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." [Isaiah 26:3.] The arm of Omnipotence is outstretched to lead us onward and still onward. Go forward, the Lord says; I will send you help. It is for My name's glory that you ask; and you shall receive. Those who are watching for your failure shall yet see My word triumph gloriously. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." [Matthew 21:22.] {GW 263.2}

No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan. {GC 510.3}

It is because selfishness exists in our hearts that temptation has power over us. But when we behold the great love of God, selfishness appears to us in its hideous and repulsive character, and we desire to have it expelled from the soul. As the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, our hearts are softened and subdued, the temptation loses its power, and the grace of Christ transforms the character. {MB 118.3}

Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encompass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend. {MB 118.4}

Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress

impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” Proverbs 18:10. {MB 119.2}

Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God’s promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” {ML 28.4}

The heart that is stored with the precious truths of God’s Word is fortified against the temptation of Satan, against impure thoughts and unholy actions. {ML 28.5}

Yet we have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices must guard well the avenues of the soul. . . The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest. {PP 460.2}

Those who make God’s Word their counselor realize the weakness of the human heart and the power of the grace of God to subdue every unsanctified, unholy impulse. Their hearts are ever prayerful, and they have the guardianship of holy angels. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of God lifts up for them a standard against him. There is harmony in the heart, for the precious, powerful influences of truth bear sway. {FLB 8.3}

The Word of God is a channel of communication with the living God. He who feeds upon the Word will become fruitful in all good works. He . . . will be the discoverer of rich mines of truth which he must work to find the hidden treasure. When [he is] surrounded with temptations, the Holy Spirit will bring to his mind the very words with which to meet the temptation at the very moment when they are most needed, and he can use them effectually. {FLB 8.4}

If you come to the study of the Scriptures in humility, with earnest prayer for guidance, angels of God will open to you its living realities; and if you cherish the precepts of truth, they will be to you as a wall of fire against the temptations, delusions, and enchantments of Satan. . . . {OHC 210.4}

Oh, how Satan watches to see his bait taken so readily, and to see souls walking in the very path he has prepared! He does not want them to give up praying and maintaining a form of religious duties; for he can thus make them more useful in his service. He unites his sophistry and deceptive snares with their experiences and professions, and thus wonderfully advances his cause. {MYP 83.2}

We must be sanctified through the truth, be wholly consecrated to God, and so live out our holy profession that the Lord can shed increasing light upon us, and that we may see light in His light, and be strengthened with His strength. Every moment that we are not on our watch we

are liable to be beset by the enemy and are in great danger of being overcome by the powers of darkness. Satan commissions his angels to be vigilant and overthrow all they can; to find out the waywardness and besetting sins of those who profess the truth, and throw darkness around them, that they may cease to be watchful, take a course that will dishonor the cause they profess to love, and bring sorrow upon the church. The souls of these misguided, unwatchful ones grow darker, and the light of heaven fades from them. They cannot discover their besetting sins, and Satan weaves his net about them, and they are taken in his snare. {EW 105.1}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. {SC 21.2}

Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory. {DA 37.3}

It is the fragrance of our love for our fellow men that reveals our love for God. It is patience in service that brings rest to the soul. It is through humble, diligent, faithful toil that the welfare of Israel is promoted. God upholds and strengthens the one who is willing to follow in Christ's way. {AA 560.2}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience. {AA 560.3}

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ. {SC 68.2}

You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. {SC 68.3}

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man's necessity. He "took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," that He might minister to every need of humanity. Matthew 8:17. The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character. {MH 17.1}

Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and are constantly referring to the feelings they had at such and such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come their house is swept away. . . . {MYP 71.3}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride. {MYP 72.1}

In the Bible the will of God is revealed. Through all time this book is to stand as a revelation of Jehovah. To human beings the divine oracles have been committed to be the power of God. The truths of the Word of God are not mere sentiment, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin have clouded the understanding, is removed. {RH, November 10, 1904 par. 4}

The words, "A new heart will I give you," mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our views of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the Word of God. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher grade of intelligence. {RH, November 10, 1904 par. 5}