



## Faith and Temptation

James 1:13-18 |

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### SUMMARY

If you read what James is writing, then, at first, it seems like he shifts gears mid-thought from trials (suffering) to temptation. That's the way that it reads in our English translations, but if we were lived in James' world and spoke the lingua franca of the day, we would use the same word (peirasmos) for both trials and temptation!

But this doesn't mean that James is equating the two. Instead the same word has a couple of nuances. Dan Dorani puts it this way,

*"James knows that a test can be taken two ways. We can view it as a trial and turn to God for aid, so we persevere. Or we can read it as a tragedy, or as a senseless accident, or as a failure—on God's part—to love and protect us. Worse yet, some who meet trials blame and attack God for them, accusing him of malice. They say he tests them too severely, pushing them toward sin so they will fall. When they face tests, they do not endure, but give up. Believing failure is inevitable, they do fail, and then seek someone to blame. "God is tempting me," they say (James 1:13). "He is leading me to ruin. James says that this is preposterous!"*

What he's saying is that God doesn't single people out to give them Mission Impossible-style tests that they are doomed to fail. So while it is true that God tests his people, it is only to reveal, for our benefit, the true nature of our faith.

Think of it this way, strength conditioning reveals the true nature of our physical capacities. If I've been sitting on the couch for the last several years (a safe assumption) and I decide to enter a triathlon that starts the following day, what's going to happen? The true nature of my physical condition is going to be revealed. My body is going to break down, I'm going to fall to pieces.

It is the same with us spiritually. All trials contain the temptation to start blaming God when what the trials are meant to produce is a steadfast reliance upon God. When we begin to feel, in the midst of a trial, the temptation to start accusing God of malice or apathy toward us, it is a sure sign that our faith muscles are either out of shape, or that they are being stretched. And, in that moment, we are left with an option: we can either we can strain against it, tear a muscle, and wallow, or we can embrace the faith conditioning that God has brought into our life and look for how it is strengthening our faith.

THANKFULLY, even when we do strain against his training, God is gracious to us. He doesn't quit on us. How could he? Christ, our elder brother, stands there interceding and advocating for us. He cheers us on in our trials because he knows exactly the good they are producing in us. See him smile because he knows that he has made it so even these severe trials cannot be the end of us. No trial or temptation is the end of the story for those who are in Christ Jesus. Not only has he been faithful on our behalf, but he has "pioneered" and is making our faith whole! What can we do but fix our eyes on him (Hebrews 12:1-2)?

Take some time as a group to read through James 1:1-18 and then ask these questions:

1. What stood out to you as you read today?
2. What point does James seem to be making?
3. How does this portion of Scripture connect to what came before? How does it connect to what comes after?
4. What didn't make sense? What do you still wonder about?
5. How do you respond to trials in your life? Do you feel like they are senseless accidents, or perhaps even a failure on God's part to love and protect you as he should? Do you tend to look more at your struggle or at Jesus?