

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

James 1: 13-18

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We will continue to read James chapter 1. Let's read from verse 13 to verse 18 today.

The theme of the Book of James is to encourage saints to live a life full of virtues in faith. True virtue is not external imitation, nor is it the constraint of regulations, but the manifestation of a perfected and complete life. For saints to achieve a perfected life and experience completeness, they need to endure various trials in their daily lives, remove the evil desires of the flesh, and, through the motivation of loving the Lord, stand firm through all kinds of tests. When the Lord returns, they will receive the crown of life.

In Greek, "trial" and "temptation" are the same word. God permits an environment to come upon us with the intention of testing us to perfect our faith, while Satan uses it to tempt us, causing us to stumble and corrupting our faith. For trials, we must endure; for temptations, we must reject. Verses 2 to 12 of this chapter speak about God's trials, and verses 13 to 18 speak about Satan's temptations and the way we can reject them.

Verse 13: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."

God's trials are meant to help us and are positive and constructive; Satan's temptations, on the other hand, are meant to corrupt us and make us fall. Therefore, when one is tempted, they should not say, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. God never has evil intentions toward people; He cannot be tempted by evil because He is so righteous and holy. Evil has no foothold before God, and thus it cannot tempt Him.

Naturally, God will not use evil to tempt people. Therefore, if a person is overcome by evil, they cannot blame God, for God does not tempt anyone.

After man's fall, sin entered the world through one man and dwelled in human flesh, causing people to have evil and often use evil to test God. Hebrews 3:8-9 says, "Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years." Here it records how the Israelites in the wilderness tested God for forty years, to the point of provoking God's anger, resulting in God not allowing them to enter His rest.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is not only the Israelites in the Old Testament who tested God; even today, New Testament saints often test God. God's will is for people to be perfected and live a godly life, but people frequently go against God's will, provoking His anger. When God disciplines them, they still blame God. This is how people test God.

Next, James clearly analyzes the mechanism of human sin in verses 14 and 15. This is almost the clearest description in the entire Bible of how people commit sin. I hope we can all understand this and learn to reject temptation, so as to avoid falling into sin.

Verse 14-15: " But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

At the beginning, it mentions that each person is tempted. By whom are they tempted? Of course, they are tempted by Satan. When Jesus began His ministry, He first went into the wilderness for forty days and nights and was tempted by Satan. Matthew 4:3 calls Satan "the tempter." In 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Satan is also referred to as "the tempter." Satan is the ruler of this world, and he uses things in the world that people see as desirable to tempt and seduce them, such as wealth, status, power, fame, or baser things like lust and greed. These are all tools Satan

uses to tempt and lure people. These are external temptations, but external temptations alone do not cause a person to sin. There are also internal factors. James says that a person is drawn away by their own desires.

When humanity fell, sin entered and dwelled in human flesh, inciting people's desires and working in tandem with the temptations of the external world to lead them into sin. James describes this process very vividly: he says that desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin. This means that Satan uses the things of the world to tempt people. What are the things of the world? 1 John 2:16 tells us that they include three categories: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. When Satan uses these to tempt people, it arouses their internal desires, and when these desires have conceived, they give birth to sin. The mere arrival of temptation does not constitute sin; only when our desires have conceived—when they have taken shape in our hearts—do they give birth to sin. Thus, the production of sin results from the combination of internal desire and external temptation, which then gives birth to sin. When sin is fully grown, it brings forth death.

Hebrews 4:15 mentions, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Therefore, the arrival of temptation is not sin; only when desire is aroused and combined with external temptation does it give birth to sin. When Satan tempts us by placing various enticements before us and giving us all kinds of sinful thoughts, such as coveting people, things, or possessions that do not belong to us, we can choose not to accept these temptations and thoughts. By not allowing the temptation to combine with our desires, we prevent sin from being conceived and thus avoid committing sin.

Therefore, Paul advises Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22 to flee youthful lusts. Paul also advises us in Ephesians 4:27 not to give place to the devil, meaning our souls should be led by the Holy Spirit and not drawn by our desires, so that we do not sin. In the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus teaches us to pray, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." It is, of course, best to avoid falling into temptation altogether. However, once temptation arrives, we must learn not

to give place to the devil, to flee from our desires, and not allow external temptation to combine with our internal desires. If we fail and commit sin, the next part of the Lord's Prayer asks God to deliver us from the evil one, to prevent us from falling into the snare of sin and allowing sin to grow and bring forth death. James gives a clear description of the formation of sin and death. In verses 16 to 18, James tells us the method to escape temptation.

Verse 16-17: “Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

Here, James reminds the saints to open their eyes, not to be deceived, not to fall for Satan's tricks, and not to be taken in by the devil's schemes. Good and perfect gifts cannot come from Satan. Truly good things come from above, descending from the Father of lights. Satan does not possess these good things himself, so how could he give them to you? Therefore, do not be deceived by Satan. Everything Satan has to offer is the fleeting and empty pleasure of the world, providing short-term enjoyment but resulting in long-term suffering. Only God is the Father of lights and the true source of all good things.

In Satan's world system, everything comes at a cost, while the gifts from the Father are priceless and given freely by grace. The sunlight, air, and water that we rely on for survival are free gifts from God in nature, and this will never change because God Himself is unchanging. There is no shadow of turning with Him; God is always faithful and reliable, and His intentions towards us never change. No matter what situation we find ourselves in, if we turn to the Father of lights, we can receive His good and perfect gifts. James reminds us that we must recognize that the truly good and perfect things come from the Father and not from Satan. Then James tells us about the Father's will for us.

Verse 18: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

God, according to His own will, brought us forth by the word of truth. When the first ancestor, Adam, fell, God, according to His own will, prepared redemption for humanity by sending His only begotten Son to be the propitiation, fulfilling the word of truth. As John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." To all who receive this word of truth, according to John 1:12: "He gave the right to become children of God." God not only brought us forth by the word of truth but also made us like the firstfruits of His creation.

Here, James wisely uses two statements to elucidate our relationship with the Father. First, He brought us forth by the word of truth, establishing a life relationship with us. God's purpose is for us to be the firstfruits of His creation. This purpose brings us back to God's intention for humanity when He created man in Genesis 1:26. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His image and likeness so that man would resemble God both inwardly and outwardly and represent God in ruling over His creation. After the fall, man could no longer adequately represent God, but God's will cannot be thwarted. God established a plan of redemption to fulfill His original purpose for humanity through the new creation.

He first brought us forth by the word of truth, giving us the life that comes from God. However, this life needs to grow until it becomes perfect and complete, lacking nothing. For our growth, God arranges various trials to help us mature. Throughout this process, God is faithful; He never changes, and with Him, there is no variation or shadow of turning. One day, we will grow and mature, becoming like the firstfruits.

What is the firstfruits? 1 Corinthians 15 discusses the resurrection, and verse 23 clearly tells us, "Christ, the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His

coming." Regarding the saints, Romans 8:29 says, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." A better translation for "conformed to the image of His Son" would be "to be molded into the image of Christ," so that Christ would be the firstborn among many brethren. Thus, Christ is the firstfruits.

In our process of spiritual growth, we must take Christ as our example, allowing ourselves to be molded into His image. Ultimately, we can become like the firstfruits, with God's life within and displaying the virtues of Christ outwardly. In this way, we can be like the firstfruits among God's creation. How is this explained? Originally, when humanity rebelled and fell, God cursed the earth, and all of creation was affected. Romans 8:20-21 says, "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." After humanity's fall, creation also suffered, falling into futility and corruption. Only when the sons of God are revealed—when we all receive the adoption as sons—can creation be liberated from its bondage to decay and enter into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Here we see that Christ is the firstfruits, and when the saints grow to maturity and completeness like the firstfruits, creation will be released from its bondage to decay. This is God's predetermined will. Our spiritual growth plays a crucial role in fulfilling God's will.

Dear brothers and sisters, it turns out that our spiritual growth is so crucial in God's eternal purpose. We can no longer be lazy and fruitless; we must rise up and actively cooperate with God. Through the various trials God prepares in our daily lives, our spiritual life can grow. How do we prove that our spiritual life has grown? It is by living a life full of virtues in our everyday activities. This is James' main burden.

Let us pray together: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us forth by the word of truth and preparing us to be like the firstfruits among Your creation. Thank You for the various trials You arrange in our daily lives, allowing us to undergo many tests so that our hearts may be perfected and our lives may grow. Thank You for being so faithful throughout this process. With You, there is no variation or shadow

of turning, and Your will is sure to be fulfilled. Have mercy on me and grant me grace to escape from lust and to give no place to the devil, so that Satan's temptations do not produce sin and death in me. Bless my daily life. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.