

Take Your Problem to Jesus!

The nature of trials and temptations

Trials are related to the things that happen to us outwardly under God's sovereign hand. They are an outward manifestation of things that the Lord allows in order to test and prove the life in us and to test and prove the faith in us. However, *temptation is* more inward. *Trials* are mentioned in James 1:2, and *temptation is* mentioned in verses 13-15. Temptation has to do with what originates in us. It is not something that comes from God. The temptation spoken of in verse 13 originates from our own lust and has to do with the realm of the flesh. The realm where there is a lot of inward desire and conflict. But trials are something that God allows outwardly in order to prove and test our indwelling faith.

Trials in relationship to the kingdom

First, we need to understand what trials are all about and what is taking place in our lives. For this we need to see the truth of the kingdom of God and to know that as a believer, when we are regenerated and born again, we instantly have one destiny, and that is the kingdom. The Lord is coming back and He is going to rule and reign on this earth. And He wants us to be ones who will rule and reign with Him in His kingdom. So what we are doing today has direct correspondence to what we will be doing in the future when the Lord comes back in His kingdom. Remember the parable in the Gospels where the servants came to their lord and he said to them, "You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23; cf. Luke

12:42-44). This indicates that when the Lord comes, there will be certain ones who have been "faithful over a few things" in this age. And because of this they will be given responsibility with the Lord in the coming age, which is the age of the kingdom.

James and the Sermon on the Mount

The entire book of James was written with the kingdom in view. And the way to understand the book of James is simply to understand the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount and the book of James run parallel. Both are focused on the kingdom life. You can see this if you compare the verses in the book of James with those in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. There is a direct correlation between James and these sayings that the Lord spoke in Matthew 5—7.

We must remember that James was the Lord's flesh brother, and he was also the same James who was a leading apostle and an elder in the church in Jerusalem. So this James who wrote the book of James had an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus in the flesh. And no doubt when the Lord was speaking Matthew 5, 6, and 7, James was taking in every word. This is confirmed by the fact that James in his Epistle virtually gives us the Sermon on the Mount once again in his own words. Some words are verbatim from the Lord's mouth. The more time spent in these two sections of the Word, the more correlation will be found between them.

Christians have had trouble with the book of James, feeling that his speaking about works contradicts Paul's speaking about being justified by faith. But when works

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are understood in the light of the kingdom as taught by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, then all apparent contradiction is cleared up. To understand the nature of the book of James, it is imperative to understand the nature of the Sermon on the Mount. We will see that what James says about works is identical to what the Lord said in Matthew 5—7 and to what Paul says in his writings.

Now let me share a story. Years ago as a young man I preached the Sermon on the Mount every Lord's day morning, verse by verse. And after I finished two years of preaching from the Sermon on the Mount, I discovered I had missed the main point. For two years I was saying to the congregation, "You need to go the second mile. You need to turn the other cheek. You need to love those that despitefully use you, and you need to pray for them. You need to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Each week I spoke the Sermon on the Mount without understanding its nature. I believe some went out of those meetings a little discouraged because, who can keep the Sermon on the Mount?

To have no lust in your heart when looking, to have no reaction of anger in your relationships with people, to not have a bad attitude — here the Lord took the law far beyond what the letter of the law says, to the inward aspects of our life. For example, He said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:21-22). So the Lord elevated the law, and when you read the Sermon on the Mount, you may have the feeling, "This is not real. Lord, how could we live this way?" But don't miss the main point — the Sermon on the Mount is a description of the life of Jesus who fulfilled all the law! The inner nature of the Sermon on the Mount is *Christ Himself* in a detailed way.

The Sermon on the Mount as a description of Christ

In Matthew 5:17 the Lord says, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." Here the Lord is saying, "Listen, let Me tell you something. I am the fulfillment of everything I am speaking. I am the One who will carry this out in you." So the Sermon on the Mount is simply words that the Lord had to speak. And the reason He had to speak them is because they describe the nature of His life. He is saying, "I have to tell you, be a person without lust in your heart. I have to tell you, be a person who does not make

derogatory statements toward others, calling them Raca or empty-headed fool. Be a person who goes the second mile. Be a person who is so willing to be inconvenienced at any time. If someone wants your shirt, give him your coat also. Be a person who will go out of your way to love. I have to speak this way to you because these words are words describing Me."

When we read the New Testament and all the words the Lord spoke, we may ask ourselves, who can live this life? But the Lord said, "I am that life, and I am the fulfillment of it." He lived that life for 33 1/2 years. And then He died on the cross. He shed His blood for us. He paid the penalty for our sins. He did something to reconcile us to God. And not only did He do that outwardly, but inwardly He justified us. My testimony is, "I am right with God. I have nothing against me at this very moment. My righteousness is Jesus Christ and I am justified simply by faith. I know I have a perfect standing with God." The Lord not only did all this through His death, but then He was buried and He was raised from the dead; and now He is alive as the Spirit so that He can come into us. He has become in resurrection what 1 Corinthians 15:45 says, a life-giving Spirit. So Jesus is available this moment. He is present. And what happens is that when we believe, He not only makes us right judicially, but He regenerates our spirit.

The life of the Sermon on the Mount in our spirit

When you hear the term "born again," do you know what it means? It refers to your spirit. Even though your body and soul have been born, you have a spirit that is dead until Jesus comes into it. Your spirit needs to be born again, or born of God. Why? Because God did not make a spirit within you just so that you would have a spirit. God made your spirit as a "parking stall" with a name written at the head of the stall — Jesus Christ. In other words, our spirit was made for Jesus to come and live right inside. We actually receive Christ. He actually gets into us. The person of Jesus comes to live in our spirit. We are born again.

This is the way we were made — with a spirit, a soul, and a body. And Jesus was outside of us. But then we heard the gospel and we believed and we received Christ. Christ came into us to be our personal Savior. Now He lives inside of us. When Jesus comes in, guess who comes in! Jesus Himself — His Person! We get His reactions, we get His mind, we get everything that is part of His Person. He is a person, just like you are a person and I am a person. There is so much in us. We have the capacity to love. We have the capacity to feel. We have the capacity to choose. We have tastes. We have likes. We have dislikes. We are persons. Jesus is not something other than a person. He

has likes and dislikes. He has tastes. He has reactions. He has feelings. And guess what His feelings are! He goes the second mile. He turns the other cheek. He is inconvenienced over and over again for the sake of others. He is without lust. He does not get angry. He is a Person who is alive. Now this Person is inside of us reproducing His life in us.

Before I became a Christian, I used to curse. In the locker room or wherever — I just had a foul mouth. I did not have a sensitive conscience over my bad language. But do you know what happened when Christ came into me? That language was no longer compatible with my insides. It just did not fit. God was not cursing people. God loves people. And there was a consciousness in me that these words did not correspond. They were not compatible with the new part of me. It did not make me happy to utter those words anymore. This kind of experience shows us that Christ is a Person inside of us living His life and reproducing His life within us.

The Sermon on the Mount may seem like ethics. It may appear that the Lord is saying, “Do this. Don’t do that.” But those words are linked to Himself. If you separate those words from Jesus Himself, you are going to be out there on a limb all by yourself, in your own strength, trying to be a good Christian yet knowing inside that you are a hypocrite, because you do have lust and you do have hate and you do not like it when people inconvenience you. In yourself and in myself there is no good thing. But what is so wonderful is that there is Another life in us, and that life is Christ. He is a Person. And His life is the life of the kingdom.

The kingdom life in James

Jesus is the King, and the King lives in us. And the King living in us creates the kingdom of God. We have to see that Matthew 5, 6, and 7 are the Lord’s words about a kingdom life. If you are going to live one with the Lord, if you are going to live in fellowship with Him and you want to grow in Him, then be sure that what you read in these chapters is going to start coming out of you. You are going to grow up into those areas, and you will find that what you have read is coming out in your experience.

The kingdom life in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is what the book of James is all about. James just breaks it down into his own words, and it is related to our living. For example, James 2:5 says, “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” Here James uses the phrase “heirs of the kingdom” in referring to God’s promise of the kingdom to those who love Him. So inheriting the kingdom is

conditional. If I am not loving Jesus, I am not going to receive the promise of the kingdom. But if I am a lover of Jesus, He promises that I will inherit the kingdom.

But listen, to love Jesus does not mean that you are without problems and without the feeling of your weaknesses. Many times your love for the Lord is manifested at your lowest moments, when you are disgusted with yourself the most. I once said to a servant of the Lord, “I know Romans 8:28 says that all things work together for good to those who love God, but what if we don’t love Him?” He said, “The fact that you say you don’t love Him indicates that you love Him all the more.” In other words, you are disgusted with yourself. You are disgusted with your way of life. You realize within yourself that you do not have love for the Lord. The very fact that the “motors” are turning inside and you realize that you do not have love for the Lord and you wish you had more love for the Lord, *that* is desire for God. That is called “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” because you will be filled (Matt. 5:6). It indicates that you have love for the Lord.

So in the middle of ourselves, in the middle of feeling weak, we oftentimes have deep desires for God. Even when we have failed, the Lord is there and we can say, “Right here, right now, Lord, my mind is being badgered by some thoughts. Lord, my emotions are flat.” Yet, despite our mind and despite our emotion, we have a deeper part. And that deeper part is our spirit where Jesus lives 24 hours a day. So from within, we can just say, “I still love You, Jesus. I still love You, Lord.” This helps us to see that Christ is in us to be everything, despite what we pass through.

We have seen that James 2:5 speaks about loving the Lord and inheriting the kingdom. Now let us look at Matthew 5:20, where the Lord speaks about entering the kingdom: “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” James says that you are heirs of the kingdom, and the Lord says that you are going to enter the kingdom. So in both books the thought that is presented is the thought of the kingdom. Also, James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” So James 1:12 and James 2:5 say the same thing. One says “the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him,” and the other says “heirs of the kingdom.” So in the book of James, the thought of the kingdom is presented again and again.

With this understanding, let us look at some more similarities between these two books. The crown of life is

there in James, and the pathway to life is in Matthew 7:13-14. It has to do with the narrow way which leads to life. Also James talks a lot about hearing and doing: Don't just be hearers of the word, but doers of the word (1:22). Remember what the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock." So the thought of hearing and doing is in James, and it is also directly from the Lord's mouth in Matthew.

How to pray and how to ask is in the book of James: Ask for wisdom and God gives it (1:5-8). And the Lord talks about asking, seeking, and knocking in Matthew 7:7-8. He also talks about lusts and pleasures in Matthew 5, and James brings up these same matters in chapters 1 and 4. If you go through these two books, you can see that James just reiterates the Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount. This is the nature of the book of James.

Look at both the Lord's words in Matthew and James' words. Just as every word that Jesus spoke was an extension of Himself, and He had to speak that way because that is the nature of His life, so also every word in the book of James is fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Himself. He is the life and the nature that carries everything out.

As you go on in your experience of Christ in the Christian life, you see things in yourself that are negative. You see your unwillingness. It just means that in your flesh dwells no good thing (Rom. 7:18). So if we see our unwillingness, it is only a call for us to turn to the Lord Jesus and say, "Lord, thank You. You are the willing One within me. Live in me, Jesus. Grow in me." This kind of prayer is the whole meaning of John 15:4, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, you also cannot do it on your own.

And then in verse 5 He says, "Without Me you can do nothing." You cannot do anything to reproduce the virtues of God within your being on your own. So the most important thing in your life is this — How is your intimate touch with Jesus? Do you draw from Him? Do you talk to Him? Do you complain to Him? Do you say, "Lord, God, You have to come in now." Are you in a talking relationship? Do you bring Him into your everything? Do you bring Him into your anxieties? Do you bring Him into your temptations? Do you bring Him into your thought life? Bring Him in. Just bring everything to Him.

Take problem to Jesus

Read the accounts in the Gospels. There are problems.

Here is a blind man. Take the blind man to Jesus. And Jesus touches Him. Then there is a woman with an issue of blood — "Let me get through the crowd. Let me just get to Jesus." And she touches Him and she gets healed. And then you have a lame man. Just take the lame man to Jesus. In the Gospels every problem you see is to take to Jesus. *Just take the problem to Jesus.* And now with us it is the same. Are you disturbed over something in your school life, in your job, in your plans? Are you disturbed? Take the disturbance to Jesus. And the way you do it is you use His name. Just say "Jesus."

Today we do not have the physical Jesus walking on the earth so that we can touch Him physically. But His name is just as real as His physical presence, because His name is His person. When you call "Bill," I respond. When you say "Jesus," He responds in you. Don't take responsibility for your problems. Give your problems to Jesus. And when Satan comes to badger your mind and your thought life, you can pray this way, "Jesus, he's here again!" When the devil comes, instead of you trying to overcome in yourself, say, "Jesus, they're here again, these visitors in my mind." This means that what you are saying is what the Lord said — "Without Me you can do nothing." So just keep bringing yourself to the Lord. This is the way you go on in the Christian life — abiding in Him.*

— Bill Freeman

* This month's article is taken from chapter 1 of the book *The Kingdom Life* by Bill Freeman. This book of 227 pages is a study of the Book of James showing the harmony between James and Paul. *The Kingdom Life* may be ordered for \$ 7.95, postpaid, from **Ministry of the Word**, P. O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (480) 948-4050; (800) 573-4105 • Fax: (480) 922-1338 • Email: MinWord12@aol.com.

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