

TEMPTED TO SIN

James 1:9-20

This verse, along with the next two, form a sort of a paradox. The brother of low degree is to rejoice, and the rich is to rejoice, too. But they are to rejoice in opposite things: the low degree in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low. The gospel of Christ has a leveling effect. It always exalts the lowly, but humbles the high.

"The brother" simply means "the Christian." "The brethren" and "the saints" were the usual terms employed by believers in the first centuries of the Christian era to designate members of the churches. The name "Christians," which originated at Antioch, was given in all likelihood by the heathen, and only gradually came to be accepted and exalted in by believers themselves. How sweet a term "brother" is! To be a brother is real cause for rejoicing, even though one of low degree. This low degree is only in man's estimation.

To be a child of God is above any rank or position. What need he care for the higher worldly attainments of some; he has been seated in the heavenlies with Christ. In Christ you are richer than the richest in this world, and you will be honored above the most famed. Then, as now, there were many poor Christians. And among the Jews who embraced Christianity there was a special cause of poverty, in the intense bigotry of their unbelieving countrymen, through which, in all likelihood, many were in one way or another deprived of their former means of earning a livelihood, simply because they called the hated Nazarene their Lord. Poverty was often due to persecution for conscience sake.

The brother of low degree is to rejoice in that he is exalted.

"A tent or a cottage, what do I care,
They're building a palace for me, over there;
Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing,
All glory to God, I'm a child of the King."

The rich brother is to rejoice in that he is brought low. His riches may have caused him to become proud and self-confident. He is accustomed to the plaudits of men. He is a great one, held in high esteem. Yet he must come to Christ as a sinner, confessing his need, forsaking his self-trust. Christ Himself was rich, and for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.

This scripture carries with it two finished pictures. There is, first of all, the finished picture of righteousness and right living, which is reached by the victors of temptations and testings. There is secondly, the finished picture of unrighteousness and evil living, which accrues to those who yield to divers lusts.

James powerfully sketches the natural history of temptations if yielded to and the glory of victory if overcome. Here he emphasizes the blessing of temptation endured.

All Christians have trials and temptations. If they are to win a crown, they must do more than just pass through trials. The real hero in a battle may not be the one who advanced, but rather the one who stood in the hard place, and took, without retreat, the fierce onslaught of the enemy. Some are sweet because all is lovely around them, but the truly great are sweet in the midst of great trial.

Some are righteous because treated justly, but the stalwart remain righteous in the midst of much wrong. Some do not fall into sin because sheltered on every side, but the strong remain pure in spite of fierce temptation.

A Christian is called upon to endure trials for the testing of his faith, as a chastening of the Lord, to cause him to be humble, or to teach him to be sympathetic and helpful to those who are enduring trials. Dr. Moon of Brighton, England is an example of the latter

purpose of trial. He went blind just at a time when he was ready to achieve renown and usefulness in his chosen sphere of labor. At first his blindness embittered him. Of what use now were his capabilities and knowledge? He could not use them in the dark. Then the thought came to him that somehow he might make it possible for blind people to read the Word of God. This led him to invent the Moon alphabet. As a result, over three million blind people are reading the Bible in their native tongues. As with Dr. Moon, the Lord may send us trials in order that we may be helpful to others.

Some there are, who live looking only at the things which are seen. They never consider the harvest; they sow without thinking what they will grow. Their only concern is the bird in the hand; they care nothing for the two in the bush. They lay the foundations without any concern as to the building that it must carry. They live today without thinking of tomorrow. They live in-time, as though there was no eternity.

I. Two Things About The Christian's Testings.

1. The present picture.

Verse twelve speaks of "enduring temptation," and of "when he is tried." This is the present picture of the faithful believer.

(1) How does the world view this picture?

The world bemoans us our lot. It is the source of our trials and testings, under Satan's hand, and then it insinuates that we are tried because we are forsaken of God. This was the case in the fate of Job. The devil impugned Job's integrity. Then, under the permission of God, the devil laid a heavy hand on Job.

The world asserts that the lot of the saved is a hard one. It says, "They cannot do anything, go anywhere, or enjoy anything." The Christian life is decried as one robbed of satisfaction and happiness.

In all of this the world forgets that the true saint glories in his present sufferings and counts them "all joy." The world knows nothing of the peace, the love, or the joy that thrills the heart of every faithful saint. He sings mid his trials and rejoices in the midst of his testings.

(2) How does the Christian view this picture?

The Christian views the present trials and testings as blessings in disguise. He knows that they are working for him. He knows that they help to strengthen him, to establish him, to perfect him, to settle him.

2. The future picture.

What does James say? "When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

The lot of the Christian is certainly preferable to that of the sinner, both here and hereafter.

Lay the blame for your sin where it is due, and that is on yourself. A conviction of personal responsibility and guilt must always be the first stage of the passage to true peace. The first task of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin.

Under the consciousness of sin and the terror of punishment, we are all prone to cast blame away from ourselves, generally on other men or on Satan, but sometimes on God. But, subtle as wicked men are, neither they nor Satan can compel us to sin. We are free to choose the evil or the good, and it is our choosing the evil instead of the good that constitutes sin. If a poor man becomes dishonest, he blames his poverty. The drunkard blames the associates among whom he is thrown, and by whom he has been led on from the pleasant social glass to utter debasement. So it is in most cases.

II. Two Things Satan Hates.

1. He hates the glories of the redeemed in heaven, the finished picture of the righteous.
2. He hates the sorrows of the damned in hell, the finished picture of the wicked.

III. God Is The Author Of All Good. Verse 17.

1. Every good gift is from God.
We do not have anything except that which we have received. Back of every blessing we enjoy is God. Every blessing is the gift of God.
2. God is the Father of lights.
3. God never changes.
He is the same yesterday and today and forever.

IV. God Is The Begetter Of Life. Verse 18.

1. Saints are sons by the will of God.
Christians are not saved because they wrought out or sought their own salvation. Had God left them alone they never would have been born again. The whole plan of redemption was wrought out by Him. It is all enclosed in the will of God.
2. Saints are sons through the Word of God.
"He begat us with the Word of Truth." God has handed to His ministers a Living Word capable of begetting life.
3. Saints take precedence over all of God's creatures.
Let us rejoice in our position!

V. God Commands That We Be Swift To Hear, Slow To Speak, And Slow To Wrath. Verse 19.