TITLE: **DON'T SHIFT THE BLAME**
DON'T STEAL THE CREDIT

TEXT: JAMES 1:13-18

INTRO:

Christians like everyone else face difficulties from outer circumstances. We are susceptible to disease or injury; Our houses catch fire, our possessions are stolen, our jobs are lost, our families are threatened. We live in a hostile, mixed up world. But we face a different kind of trouble that is more subtle and is often more difficult to handle - internal difficulties problems with evil thoughts, sinful feelings, tendencies to sin etc.

Discuss context of trials (1:2-18) Sometimes trials are testings on the outside (1:2-12), and sometimes they are temptations on the inside (v.13-18). We may ask, "why did James connect the two? -external and internal? The answer is simply this: If we are not careful, the testings on the outside may become temptations on the inside. God tests, He never tempts.

Ill. O.T. Israel: 1) wandering in the wilderness was a test.
2) their desire for water & meat was a temptation.

James realized that some individuals when subjected to temptations, were prone to think unfairly about God. They would blame God for their failure, or excuse their yielding to it.

From the beginning of time it has been man's first instinct to blame others for his own sin. (ex. Gen.3:12,13)
Ex. the shifting of blame by Adam & Eve. "The woman **you** gave me..."

Not only is it a tendency in fallen man to blame others for what he actually did (ex. sin), man has a tendency to take the credit for what he actually did not do (ex. salvation).

Man is capable of being deceived in both os these areas.
(**see v.16**)

Of all areas in life where it is essential that you don't be deceived the two most important areas deal with your spiritual well being:
PROPOSITION: **DON'T BE DECEIVED ABOUT SIN & SALVATION!**

I. DON'T SHIFT THE BLAME (FOR YOUR SIN) (v.13-15)

Some excuse their conduct by blaming their fellow man, circumstances (ex.weather), or Satan etc. Some excuse their sin by saying "we are all sinners", Some say "I'm only human". Many say: "The Devil made me do it" Others such as self-deceived homosexuals say: "I can't help it, God make me this way" Blaming God is the most despicable.

A.THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION IS YOU (IT'S FROM WITHIN) (v.13,14)

Man has always blamed God. Prov.19:3 - "a man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord." (NIV)

1. Temptation is not from God (v.13)

James by using the word "of" (from) [ ] rather than
[ ](directly from) is saying that God is not even remotely connected with tempting anyone.

People today may not be so bold as to blame God directly, but they do so indirectly. God may test but he never tempts (solicits to evil).

a.It is contrary to the **nature** of God.
"cannot be tempted"
Pagan god were viewed as being liable to temptations to moral evil and as being tempters themselves. Their character reflects man's wicked heart which invented them.

How could Jesus be tempted if He was God?
Jesus could only be tempted (note: passive - by someone outside of Himself) in His human nature not his divine, because his human nature had appetites (desires for food, drink, sleep etc), but His Divine nature was impeccable; it had no needs; no unsatisfied desires. "He was in all points tempted like as we are" (human nature).

b.It is contrary to the **character** of God.
"neither tempteth he any man"
Temptation is against God's Holy, pure, righteous character. It is impossible for Him to be the source of temptation. Because to tempt is to sin, and God would be a sinner if He tempted just one person.

Contrary to God being the tempter, He is actually the provider of a way to escape temptation (I Cor.10:13) God is not against us, but is for us in our conflict with evil.

2.Temptation comes from man's inner lust (v.14)

"each one" = indicates that temptation is a universal experience. (we all face it).

"own lust" = indicates that all claims to blameshift are futile efforts to escape personal responsibility for your actions. It is your own lust that tempts you.

Satan & the world system can externally **tease** your appetite but only **you** - yourself are responsible for yielding to it.

Our main problem is not our environment.
Ex. A monk can live alone yet he has his worst enemy right there with him. (His sin nature).

Jesus said that what defiles a man comes "from within, out of the heart of men..." (Mk.7:21-23)

"lust" = appetite, desire. Word is used in a good sense (Lk.22:15, Phil.1:23; I Th.2:17); but generally in an evil sense. (context decides) Evil desires are those desires that are self-centered and contrary to God's will.
"lust" does not necessarily refer to sexual passion. But to the normal desires in life that were given by God. But they were given to be satisfied God's way.
A desire to eat is normal - but it is sin if you steal or if you are a glutton.
" drink " - " drunkard.
" sleep " - " lazy.
" sex " - " fornication or adultery (Heb.13:4).
" good feelings - " drugs.

Every appetite can be satisfied in a Biblical way. They way an appetite is satisfied will determine whether or not you sinned. All other ways of satisfying your desires are **perversions** of God's way of satisfying them. And they are **obsessions** - they become our master, our idol, our god!
Appetites are to be your servants not your master.

"drawn away" & "enticed" = two phases of the same process. 1) re-divert your attention, then 2) wet your appetite.

"drawn away" = to drag out. To intensely pull toward the enticement. Ex. Potiphar's wife "caught him by his garment..." Gen.39:12.

"entice" = to catch with bait. Ill. of fishing: depicts the juicy worm dangling before the fish to stimulate an inner craving and prompt some anticipated pleasure.

note: When your are tempted, you will see only the attractiveness of the desired object. You won't see the deadly hook underneath! **read Prov.7:6-23** - the wiles of the harlot.

The baits keeps us from seeing the consequences.
* Lot would not have moved to Sodom (with its attractive well watered plains) if he knew the outcome (the death of his sons in law & his wife)
* David would not have committed adultery if he would have known the outcome (the death of his child, murder of a man, incest with his daughter - Tamar, the sword never departing from his house)

Jesus could detect the bait, He knew the consequences and He knew the victory over temptation = knowing the Bible. "It is written" was his defence. "we walk by faith, not by sight".

B.THE COURSE OF SIN IS DEATH (v.15)

We are free to choose not to yield to temptation. But once you yield you are not free to choose the consequences of your choice. This is an unchanging law of God.

In verse 15 James uses the imagery of a life-cycle (conception, birth, growth, and death) to portray what happens in the cycle of sin.

"conceived" = to take together. Just as when the female egg and the male seed (sperm) are joined together life is conceived, when lust and **your will** meet sin is conceived.

You see, Temptation is not sinful per se, (Jesus was tempted Mt.4:1; Heb.2:18) **yielding to it is!**

So you must stop the conception. If you don't starve a wrong desire you will increase your appetite by feeding it and in so doing you have joined lust to your **will** and have sinned.

"lust...bringeth forth sin" - lust is the mother of sin.

"sin" = to miss the mark; fall short of the target. (failing & missing the true end and goal of you life - which is God)

"finished" = to be full grown; matured. Sin having been born has its own life & development. Unless its life & growth are terminated by repentance, sin will eventually become full grown and then will kill you. Sin that is allowed to grow is harder to be stopped.

Ill. it is harder to restrain an infant than a grown man.
Ex. of how much harder older people are to the gospel, than little children. Why? Because sin has become full grown in their lives.

A fixed habit determines the character of the man.

Don't let sin go on in your life! If you let it alone it will kill you!

Ill. Of malignant cancer starts off small but grows & grows and ends in the death of its victim. Don't let sin sink its teeth into your life. Its venom will kill you!

"death" = separation (physically, spiritually, and eternally)
The tragic outcome of sin is death. God says: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" - No! God loves you! When facing temptation, get your eyes off of the bait and look ahead to see the consequences - Death!

(note: the consequences of yielding to temptation - death- demonstrates that the enticement to do evil cannot be from
God (v.13).

> Sow a thought reap an act. Sow an act reap a habit. Sow a habit reap a destiny.
>
> The second you have a sinful thought you must expel it!
> Once you choose to dwell on it you have exercised your will and sin was conceived.
>
> Ill. "you can't keep the birds from flying overhead, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

verse 16 - is an affectionate warning ("beloved") Deceived = to be led astray, be misled, be caused to wander away from the truth. Verse 16 is like a bridge between verse 15 & verse 17. James is saying don's be deceived about the source of sin (v.13-15), nor about the source of grace (v.17-18).

II. **DON'T STEAL THE CREDIT** (FOR YOUR SALVATION) (v.17-18)

One of Satan's tricks is to convince us (via the world's system) that our Father is withholding from us what we deserve to have. (ex. Satan's approach to Eve) Yet God only gives what is Best for us; and withholds what is bad.

A.THE **SOURCE** OF GRACE IS **GOD** (IT'S FROM ABOVE) (v.17)

This verse proves that God does not tempt to sin, on the **contrary** He only gives good!

"Good gift" = good giving (describes the act of giving) (God gives generously, not sparingly)
The **way** God gives is good. (He doesn't tempt) God's giving is better than Satan's bargaining (in the end you pay for it dearly) ill. shop keepers in Israel enticing you.

"Perfect gift" = (describes the gift itself) (God gives quality not junk)
what He gives is good (it doesn't lead to death)

(Note: "perfect" [ ] maybe linked in thought to "finished" (same gk. word) (v.15) showing a **contrast** between what sin has to offer and what God has to offer.)

If you look at all that God has given you and swell on that, you won't be tempted to dwell on what He has not given you. Ex. Joseph Gen. 39:7 He focused on the fact that he was put in charge of all, but his master withheld only his wife.

Ill. of a child playing with 10 toys yet he (because of selfish sin nature) desires the 1 toy his friend has.

James by saying that gifts come from above is making the point now that they don't just drop out of the sky. Rather they come from the creater of the sky.

"Father of lights" - creator of the stars. (celestial lights; heavenly luminaries) Gen.1:14-16; Ps.136:7; Jer.31:35.
The stars reflect the glory of their creator Ps.19:1; 136:7.

"variableness" = a change in an establish course or pattern. The point is there is no variation with God. (Gal.3:28; Col.3:11)

"shadow of turning" = no shadow cast by turning. Unlike the "lights" (ex. sun & moon - the two great lights Gen.1) that move because of the Earth's rotation, God does not change in his giving.

B.THE COURSE OF SALVATION IS LIFE (v.18)

1.GOD'S WORK "His **own will**" = reflects God's activity in **contrast** to man's (v.14 "his own lust") God does not tempt to sin, rather He saves from sin! And He **does it alone! So He alone deserves the credit**.

"Begat He us" = He gave us birth. To bring forth. (same GK. word as "bringeth forth" v.15) Sin brought forth **death**! God brought forth **life**!

"Begat" - is aorist tense = shows salvation to be **one time** event. One time fact of conversion; One time spiritual birth.

To be born again = A higher birth which means a higher life. It is beneath our dignity to accept Satan's bait or to desire sinful things.

2.GOD'S MEANS "By the word of truth" (interesting: Jesus is called the Word (Jn.1:1), and the Truth (Jn.14:6).

Peter stated that the word was God`s mean to give us rebirth. I Pet.1:23 "being born again...by the word of God..."

"Faith cometh by hearing.. the Word" Rom.10:17.

Word of truth + in **contrast** to the lies that lust offered.

3.GOD'S PURPOSE "firstfruits" = from OT - first portion of the harvest that belonged to God, with a promise of a full harvest just ahead. (Ex.23:19; Lev.23:9-11; Dt.18:4).

"Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase (Prov.3:9).

2 Possibilities: 1) James (writing to Jews 1:1) is applying this term to Jewish Christians. The implication being: More fruit (saved people) will follow after you.
*2) Regenerated believers (in general) are regarded as the first stage of that ultimate renovation of that ultimate renovation of all creation, which presently resides under the divine curse since the fall. (Rom.8:18-23;30).

We as God's firstfruits should give ourselves totally to Him. (give Him your desires & let Him fill you His way!)

CONCLUSION: No matter what excuses we make, we have no one to blame for our sin but ourselves. No matter what we may think about our goodness, no one should receive the credit for our salvation but God. Don't shift the blame! and Don't steal the credit!

God has a will for your life. He has barriers that He has set up so that you might live a victorious life through temptation.
If you heed the barriers, you will win a crown (v.12); If you break through the barriers and give in to temptation you will find a coffin (v.15). Which will it be? (Wiersbe p.46)