

The Sources and the Sequences of Sanctification

Chapter 5 New Testament Audio Lesson #77



Objective: To understand the sequence of sin, the importance of obeying God's Word, and the importance of bearing fruit from faith



When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

—James 1:13-15

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

—James 2:17-18

Although God uses trials to grow us, He never tempts us to sin. God is not the source of sin or temptation. The sequence of sin begins when we see something we want. If we think about it, we start lusting after it. But if we do not feed that desire, we can stop ourselves from sinning. We control whether we take a second look and thus let temptation lead us to sin. We are no match for it, and God tells us to flee.

The Word of God gives us the power to rise above sin. It is the agent of the Holy Spirit that can bring about regeneration in our lives — that is, create life inside our hearts — when we respond properly. God's Word is like a spiritual mirror. It shows us our imperfections so we will change them. When we respond to the Word of God, we see that it is living and active and able to bring about change. But if we do nothing, we are foolish — only hearers of the Word.

In one of the most controversial sections of his letter, James states that there is no such thing as faith without works. When Abraham was tested, he trusted God and was willing to do whatever God told him to do, even to sacrifice his son. His faith was made complete by his actions. Like Jesus, James makes it clear that, *"By their fruit you will recognize them."* (Matthew 7:16) We are saved by faith alone but that saving faith is always accompanied by works that prove it is a real faith.

James says that the untamed tongue is a fire, full of evil and poison. We need spiritual discipline to tame our tongues. James also points us to the sources of true wisdom. Wisdom from God comes through His Word. We should ask for His wisdom and for the discipline to obey. If we sow in peace with the wisdom that comes from above, we will raise a harvest of righteousness.



1. True or False: God would never tempt us to sin.
2. True or False: James says that there is no such thing as faith without works.
3. True or False: We should ask God to help us tame our tongues.
4. True or False: The solution for sin is earthly wisdom.

Choose all answers that apply.

5. Why is God's Word the solution for sin?
 - a. It has a lot of examples of sin.
 - b. It can bring you new life
 - c. It can help you overcome temptation.
 - d. God creates sin so that His Word can deal with it.
6. How is God's Word like a mirror?
 - a. It helps us to see the truth about ourselves.
 - b. It reflects our glory.
 - c. It helps us feel good about ourselves.
 - d. It shows us our imperfections.
7. What should we do after hearing the Word?
 - a. Put off obeying until we are more mature.
 - b. Do what it says.
 - c. Forget about it.
 - d. Argue if you disagree with it.

8. According to James, what kind of faith saves us?
 - a. One that prays all the time for others.
 - b. One that loves to worship in song.
 - c. One that is shown by works to be real.
 - d. One that goes on many pilgrimages and performs many sacrifices.

9. How do we let people know what we believe?
 - a. By telling them many times what we believe.
 - b. By what we do and how we live.
 - c. By going to church every week.
 - d. By preaching to our neighbors.

10. Why does James use Abraham as an example of real faith?
 - a. Abraham did what God told him to do.
 - b. Abraham reached out to the poor.
 - c. Abraham treated everyone the same.
 - d. Abraham's faith was made complete by his actions.

11. Why is the tongue so dangerous?
 - a. It is always ready to strike.
 - b. It helps you praise God.
 - c. It can destroy others.
 - d. It can lift others up.

12. How can you tell if wisdom is from God?
 - a. It is filled with envy and selfish ambition.
 - b. It is peace-loving, pure, and humble.
 - c. It results in disorder and evil practices.
 - d. It will lead to righteousness.



In James 1:13-15, what is the sequence of sin? What does God's Word say you can do to avoid it?

Read James 2:17-24 again. Why is this passage so controversial? How can you demonstrate your faith - this week?



Thank God for the life-giving power of His Word. Ask Him to help you hear and obey it. Ask God for help in avoiding sin and especially in taming your tongue. Confess any sin and ask Him to give you assurance of your salvation. Ask Him to show you how to obediently live out your faith in your actions.



Going Deeper

1. How do you describe and personally apply the anatomy of a sin that James presents in his first chapter? _____

2. How would you interpret and apply the metaphor of James, when he writes that the Word of God is like a mirror? _____

3. How would you explain and apply the two kinds of religion described by James? _____

4. How would you explain and apply the two kinds of churches described by James? _____

5. How would you explain and apply the two kinds of faith described by James? _____

6. How would you explain and apply the two kinds of trees described by James? _____

7. How do you explain and apply the significance that James wrote his letter before the letters of Paul were written? _____
