



James / Faith that Works - Wk. 5
"Temptation, Sin, & the Goodness of God"
By Pastor Jody May 09/27/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

James 1:8-12 ESV

¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."

People – "Thanks be to God."

Pray

Illustration

Have you ever been put through a really hard thing, and then endured it, even when no one told you there was a prize worth achieving at the other end?

Introduction

In the text today we are wrapping up our topic today of trials or I should say the introduction to them. This letter was written to Christians across Palestine who were enduring trials, trials that would intensify in the time of Nero a short while later. All of this making it an excellent a letter for modern Christians to take seriously the important things in life, like living for the Lord Jesus, to produce a *Faith that Works*. Vs. 12-18 will break down for us the process that we will need for the rest of James. You see this was an



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introduction paragraph for this book, and here today we have the concluding lines of this prologue today, summarizing in three parts how the Christian life should be handled. So that when you read the rest of the letter you know why you would need to take it to heart.

This last section starts off with getting us to **set our sights on the right target in life**. There is something that James wants to put out there for us to shoot at, we will look at this target in v. 12. Next, we will look at **avoiding the paths that lead to death**, there is a particular warning that James has for us, a view of God that he wants to steer us from, because that view is the thing that drives many people away from the faith (vs.13-16). Then lastly, we will look at the **miracle of divine birth** (17-18), understanding how God brought us into this faith will do good to strengthen all our resolve for the days ahead.

MP

**We reject blaming God, the source of all good,
and fight the self-deception of our own hearts.**

1. Setting our sights on the target of life.

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast **under trial**, for when he has stood the test he will receive the **crown of life**, which God has promised to those who love him.

How we take aim.

^{1st} phrase - **Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.**

Blessed - μακάριος (*makarios*). Blessed or fortunate. The simplest way to interpret this word in the many places it is found in the Greek NT is to use the word 'happiness'. This is no ordinary happiness though, but according to Jesus, the Psalmists, and James this is a state of well-being that comes from God, not everyday life occurrences. That state of contentment, this blessedness, is God derived in us, we would never make it to this state if not but for God. The man that is blessed is a man that has been worked out, through, and for, by God. Blessed is the man, that has had God put him through his paces and by going through that trial/period of testing is fortunate, they have received a blessing.



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Verse 12 points, in its proclamation about trials, directly back to the beginning of this chapter.

James 1:2-4 ESV

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Trials, we were taught, is what tests our faith, to learn if it is real, to see where we are weak, to learn about God's forgiveness and steadfast love, they are to show us something about ourselves and they are to show the world something about God. Life is full of them, and we are to count them all joy. We count them joy for going through them is what makes our faith steadfast, that is, on the day you need it most, it won't fail you. Sure, things won't always work out and you don't need it to, what you and I need more than anything else is a faith that doesn't fail, a faith that produces hope, a faith that saves. And blessed is the man that God has built that type of faith in them for they will lack nothing! **How do we take aim at the right thing in life? We don't abandon the trial, seek to endure at all costs.**

This 1st phrase in v. 12 restates what we learned in vs. 2-4 again, you are fortunate when you have learned to remain steadfast under a trial, that's a good thing! But now James tells us the why, and **the why for us here in v.12 becomes the target to shoot for.** You see most people, unless you are one of those unusual people that don't need a 'why' to suffer, like a professional cross-fit competitor, or an extreme marathon runner, or people who swim like the English channel, they want to know why they must endure, what's the win?!

What we are shooting at.

2nd phrase - **for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life,** You do have a reward, and the reward sounds like something you want; a [crown](#) στέφανος (stephanos). This crown is not like what you and I first think of, a Gold, round piece, with points holding jewelry, no in the first century a



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Greek concept of a crown was most likely a wreath, garland of some type woven together, that was awarded after winning something. It is not about the worth in the object, but it is more about what the object means, and they are worn to make a public declaration about the meaning. You wear it on your head so people would know something about you. **We are shooting at, you and me, receiving a crown for the life we have lived.** So, looking at scripture there are some different meanings behind crowns, there are different exaltations that crowns can bring or different meanings behind having them.

Exaltation to Office

[Esther 8:15](#) Mordecai, cousin to Queen Esther, was awarded a crown in service of Xerxes I.

[Psalm 21:3](#) King David observes that God Himself is the one that crowns earthly rulers.

Crowns show that someone has been providentially moved from one station to another, crowns are awarded to show elevation in office.

Exaltation in Joy

[1 Thes 2:19](#) Paul says that the people he loves are his personal crowns to be shared at Christ's coming.

[SoS 3:11](#) Solomon's crown is synonymous with the joy he received at his coronation.

Crowns also show that you have received true joy, a blessedness given, wearing of a crown bestowed by God always produces joy in the believer.

Exaltation of Completion/Victory

[1 Cor 9:25](#) Paul encourages the church to run to receive an imperishable crown for their completion of the Christian life.

[2 Tim 4:8](#) Paul exclaims about the crown of righteousness to be awarded after life by the King of righteousness Himself.

Crowns will also show that the person wearing it has achieved something, that there was work to be done, and the crown was only rewarded upon the completion.

Exaltation of the Giver

[1 Peter 5:4](#) Peter talks about the honor of having received the future crown by Christ Himself.

[Rev 2:10](#) Jesus says don't be afraid there will be trials, but I myself will reward you a crown in the end for faithful endurance.



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What makes crowns so special for the believer is the one we will receive one day will be divvied out by no other than Christ Himself.

So, the receiving of a crown of life, will show an exaltation of a station we did not have before, to a joy that can't be removed, displaying a completion of the trials of life, all to be rewarded in the court of our King Jesus! Where we get to cast down our crowns at His feet proclaiming along with the elders around the throne **worthy alone is the lamb** who never gave up on me and used me to accomplish the glorious victories of heaven ([Revelation 4:9-11](#))!

So, setting our sights on the right things in life has one more step.

The way to zero in.

3rd phrase - **which God has promised to those who love him.**

Taking aim at life at the right thing, is all about missing bunch of times before you can zero in on a bull's eye. Many times, for the believer in the early parts of their lives, they aren't even aiming, when a trial comes along, they get out of line, they abandon hope, they run to sin, and they blame God. But God is so good, he sets up our lives so that we end up at that line again. Then finally it clicks one day that we want is what God has to offer. We have finally lived long enough to see the things of this world fail us, we have received enough grace to know God gives good things, not bad, so whatever is waiting for us in the end with Him is worth it. Then we learn it was the work of Jesus that taught us that and that He is worth it. We begin to see that life is all about Him not us. That's when we begin to zero in our aim.

We stop focusing on all the commands in scripture and we just start loving Him for who He is. It is love that drives us, it is loves that challenges us, it is loves that gets us going. Next thing you know the Christian life is no longer worried about doing enough good things it is all about us trying to love Jesus more! That's where God wants to get us, to the point where those that love God, are receiving their rewards through trials, they are receiving their endurance to get them to the one they love. **God's people endure trials all because we love Him and for no other reason!** So that they day we receive our crown of life, from His hands, you will know deep down why you're getting that, it is simply because you love Him all because He first loved us ([1 Jn 4:19](#))



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Setting our sights on the target of life, to receive a crown from Him who whom we love, that's what we are fighting for family. A reward that means I can truly say, without doubt in our hearts, we loved the Lord in life more than our own lives.

2. Avoiding the path that leads to death.

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Ok so James along with getting us set on life with the right focus now tells us there is something we must be aware of. It seems that the same trials that lead us to the **Crown of Life** are the same trials that lead us to the falling away from faith, it all depends on our response! Will we listen to the voice that says go your own way that leads to disobedience and disloyalty, or do we listen to God's voice that leads to devotion and deliverance?

This starts off just like v. 2 again with a very important adverb, it is not 'if' you are tempted but 'when' you are. You will not have a choice about it, that's what makes James such a good book to study, it doesn't let you run from the truth you want to run from. So, first thing James says is that when you are being tempted, DO NOT, accuse God of leading you into a temptation for evil purposes. God does send trials yes, and some of those trials will yield temptations by your will, yes, but what makes them temptations that lead to sin comes from us, not God.

1st Command - Count trials all joy!

2nd Command - Submit to Sanctification - Let maturing be perfected in you!

3rd Command - Ask God for wisdom in faith without doubt!

4th Command boast in your exaltation and humiliation.

5th Command don't believe God is tempting you to sin!

6th Command don't be deceived by your own heart.

For example, you read about one of these such tests this week in your BRP:



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Genesis 22:1-2 ESV

The Sacrifice of Isaac

22 After these things God **tested** Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

That word for [tested](#) is נָסָה *nasah*, means to test, to tempt, to be tried. It is used multiple times in the OT to show God testing His people. Testing is not for God btw, it is about us, and the testimony that is portrayed by it. In this example with Abraham, it was a test after many years of learning to follow God, so not just Abraham, but for us we could see that faith is grown, and faith is tested, and God will require from us sacrifices so we can learn if faith is real, and it benefits others when they see us live it out. In this example we all learned from, Abraham trusts the Lord God with all for all is from Him and for Him and most importantly, **He never breaks a promise/covenant!** Did you notice that the Lord did not test Him with this until he had failed in trusting God's provision several times? Remember God always brings us back to that starting line and when the time comes for those that love God, He rewards with life!

God did not do an evil thing to Abraham, if Abraham would have failed that would have all been on Him. BECAUSE God cannot be tempted by evil Himself, therefore He tempts no one, James says. In other words, tempting us to sin would achieve nothing, for there is nothing that God would gain from it. It's funny all Christians say they desire absolute Free Will until they are confronted with one of those trials they usually fail at, like a lust of the flesh, then everyone wants to be a Calvinist. They want God to take control, and they blame Him for sin, because the temptation was merely there.

Temptation, James says, leads to sin when we are lured and enticed by our own **desires**. Desires, many times in the Bible are used to show lust and lust does not originate with God.

1 John 2:16 ESV



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¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the **world**.

Desires are of the world. The 'desire' is the thing that drives the breaking of the commandments; you shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet, ([Ex 20:13-17](#)). God gives those commandments to learn about His righteousness and holiness but He also give them so we can learn that sin comes from desires, not Him. Testing by God is how we learn to fear Him and know how close to sin we really are.

Exodus 2:20 ESV

Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to **test** you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."

Testing by God is to get you to see sin, to get you to see its' danger and to get you to see its' hold on you, it is evil not to do so. For there is only one place it leads.

Romans 6:23a ESV

²³ For the wages of sin is death,

James concludes with this command which is a plead with those he loves.

¹⁶ Do not be **deceived**, my beloved brothers.

Family who is doing the deceiving if God cannot sin, that evil cannot come from Him. You see it has to come from us, our hearts, born in sin, depraved beyond our control and power to repair. Contemplate again the words of Christ on this family.

Mark 7:20-23 ESV

What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."



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Do not be deceived brothers and sisters God has not led any of us into sin, that is simply the work of desire run amuck. Remember the aim is to endure trials till we learn to love God and know that it is our own hearts that drives us into loving ourselves more.

Now embracing that truth should prepare us for this last glorious thing that should get us to stop blaming God and start us praising Him!

3. Celebrating the miracle of divine birth

¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

James just like Paul, Peter, and John believes the same things; all good comes from God, by His will, birthed in people to be His people. This picture of God helps the true believer to remember on their days of trials, don't be deceived into thinking God is a bad guy, don't trust your heart.

First thing to remember - It all starts with a **Bountiful God** (v.17). He is good, His gifts are perfect that is exactly what you need when you need it, He's never changing and fair, and all of that comes from Him who is the Father of lights. That is, He is the source of the lights in Heaven (sun, moon, and stars), He is before time, He is the creator of that which gives people light, and the source of light since the beginning has always been 'good'! As old as those lights are, and as good a thing as light is, God is the source of that. Your God is able to provide everything we need when we need and does not withhold from those who ask, and it is ALWAYS good.

Romans 8:32 ESV

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

So, our new divine birth starts with a bountiful God.



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2nd let's take in **how it all started – Of His own will He brought us forth** (v.18)

John 6:44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

Divine birth, a divine beginning starts with God calling His children out of this world. You don't have Jesus unless the Father first calls you to follow Him. He who is the light – Jesus (John 1) the Father brings to Him those who loved darkness into light, that is the use of trials and testing. It is the Father starting to open the eyes to see the light of His Son. You don't see the Son unless the Father gets you to see Him.

Ephesians 2:8 ESV

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

It was the Father's will to gift us the grace in the Son. When we see the light, and we know the light is good, and we choose to follow the light, you follow because you believe in Him, and that ability to believe and follow comes from the Father. New birth is a delivery process you are brought out of a grave, you are brought into life, and saving faith is given unto you through those trials at birth.

Divine birth is not left to circumstance, chance, and chaos, you were brought into this world by divine love, for divine purpose, and saved by divine decree of which that is the only thing you can boast in!

3rd What is the source now of this life, how did we come into being, how did this happen? **He brought us forth by the Word of His Truth** (v.18)

1 Peter 1:23,25 ESV

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God

²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.



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You read Psalm 1 last week, just look at the first 2 verses:

Psalm 1:1-2 ESV

1 Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

'Blessed is the man', what person do you know that naturally does not want to hang out with sinners, none, they don't exist! Blessed is the man, the man intervened on by God, because the Father already determined to save Him, what has become His delight? The Law of the LORD, the Word of God, and on it he meditates day and night. Then the rest of that Psalm gives you images of what that looks like. God changes us through His WORD, so that when trials come, we remember His WORDS, and then like Abraham, we trust what He says in HIS WORDS. Then next thing you know we have FAITH in that WORD, and we see Jesus as our SAVIOR in that WORD. The Word brings us through the process, through the reading of it, the preaching of it, the singing of it, and then the praying back to God. No man changes without God's Word bringing Him life, and that is why no one changes without God. Any desire you have, any conviction of sin you have learned, has come from the WORD of God, and any believing in it, has happened through God working tirelessly in you to get you to trust Him. All good things come from the Father of Lights, there is no evil intent in Him.

Now, last thing to look at today, that I think drives this home, and puts an exclamation mark on how God loves His children.

4th we were made for God - **that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures** (v.18).

First fruits only come from God. You have no fruit without first fruits, the seed to plant it, the calves to grow into maturity, the sons that bear the family line, you only have firstfruits if God wills it, supplies it, and manifests it from



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His divine source first. Firstfruits are divinely given and firstfruits are divinely owed.

Second, first fruits are the best of the fruit. (Ex 23:[19](#); 34:[26](#)). They represented the strongest, the freshest, and the promise of the good that will come. Our ancestors did not bring to God the lame, sick and diseased they only brought the best and that came out of the first fruits. God says this about us, we are not the chaff, we are not the sick, we are not the lame, no God makes us the BEST!

Lastly, the first fruits represented what type of harvest was to be brought in. It was a rejoicing in what God was going to be bringing in throughout the rest of the year. That you would know you would have enough to eat off of, you have enough to put up, you would have enough to collect seed and prepare for next years' harvest, and it would be the perfect amount whatever that was for it was God's will whatever it was.

Family, we His people, listen to this, we are HIS FIRSTFRUITS! Those that endure their trials, are the best of the best, not by our hands, we have been prepared and brought forth by His hands. We are His and therefore we are His offering to this world so that the world would know God is doing the providing, there is more to come, and they should put hope in the next season of life just like the first of our line.

Hebrews 2:9-10 ESV

⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, **crowned** with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

God is going to make us just like His son, through trials of suffering, to make us the firstfruits of all creation. He does this because He is good and full of love, and because our Father doesn't make junk, He makes a people that



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image His perfect Son. And for this reason, let's do our best to live out this main point in the weeks to come.

MP

**We reject blaming God, the source of all good,
and fight the self-deception of our own hearts.**

[CALL TO OBEY]

- 1. Mortify the Heart's Deception:** Since the text warns that we are lured by our own desires, we must take up the daily discipline of self-examination. In your home worship and personal prayer, confess the specific inclinations of your heart that lead you to blame God or external circumstances when trials arise. Rather than justifying our reactions, we must humbly acknowledge that our internal struggle with sin is the true source of our instability and pray for the grace to see our trials as divinely appointed tests meant to refine our faith rather than destroy it.
- 2. Strengthen the Will with the Word:** We must intentionally commit to the study and meditation of Scripture, for it is by the 'word of truth' that the Father brings forth new life. To combat the shifting shadows of our own changing emotions, let your family life be anchored in the objective reality of the Law and the Gospel. When a trial hits, do not rely on your own wisdom; instead, look to the Word to re-center your perspective on the goodness of the Father, ensuring that your home is a sanctuary where God's promises—not our fleeting desires—are the final authority.
- 3. Cultivate the Crown of Life through Steadfast Love:** As the 'firstfruits' of His creation, our lives are intended to be a public testimony of Christ's victory. Resolve to endure your current testing by fixing your gaze upon the 'crown of life' promised to those who love Him. Let this hope produce a joyful endurance in your daily vocation, whether in the workplace or within the home, demonstrating to a watching world that our reward is not found in the ease of this life, but in the faithful service of the King who first loved us.



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Prayer

[COMMUNION]

Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV

²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

When we partake of the bread today remember the life of Jesus lived perfect for us, He who stood firm under the ultimate trial. While we are so easily lured by our own desires and the pride of life, Jesus remained steadfast, never wavering, never seeking His own glory. By His humble obedience, He fulfilled all righteousness, becoming the 'firstfruits' of a new creation. As you eat, remember that the same power that sustained Him in His trial is the power that brings us forth by the word of truth. Let us not boast in our own strength, but in His, for He has made us worthy through His own perfect endurance. All praise the perfect effort of the Lord of Life.

When we partake of the juice, we remember the blood of the New Covenant—the very sign of the Father's bountiful grace toward His children. We are often prone to the self-deception of our own hearts, yet the blood of Christ serves as the final, irrevocable proof that our Father is the source of all good and no evil. He did not withhold His own Son but poured Him out so that our own death-bringing desires might be conquered. Let us drink in remembrance of the One who faced the ultimate trial of the cross, bearing the weight of our sin so that we might be brought into the eternal light of God. All praise to our Savior who has made a way for us through His steadfast love securing for us our future Crown of Life.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]



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*** The Congregation will stand and recites:**

Elder – "Christians, what do you believe?"

**LBCF 1689 Chapter 2 Of God and the Holy Trinity Paragraph 1 Who Is God?
(Part 1)**

God is the one living and true God... He is perfectly loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. He is full of goodness and truth. forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He rewards those who diligently seek him. 13 At the same time, he is perfectly just and terrifying in his judgments. 14 He hates all sin 15 and will definitely not clear those who are guilty. 16

1. 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; Deuteronomy 6:4 ...

13. Exodus 34:6-7; Hebrews 11:6

14. Nehemiah 9:32-33

15. Psalms 5:5-6

16. Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1:2-3

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, who is good, giving perfect gifts, birthing us by His divine will, making us the firstfruits of His creation.

Go in the name of the Son, who through steadfast obedience and perfect discipline conquered the trials of life for us.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, who will grant us the endurance needed to obtain the Crown of Life, now and go tell this world the reason for your joy!



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[FELLOWSHIP CONVERSATIONS]

1. The Nature of Blessedness: James 1:12 speaks of a 'blessed' state derived from God rather than circumstances. How does this definition challenge our worldly understanding of happiness, and in what ways can we better support one another in seeking this God-given contentment during seasons of intense hardship?

2. The Anatomy of Temptation: The text identifies a specific progression from desire to sin to death. Can you share a time when you realized you were being 'lured' by your own heart? How does the doctrine of total depravity help us avoid the common error of blaming God for the temptations we face?

3. The Mirror of the Word: Since the Father brought us forth by the 'word of truth,' how does the regular, systematic study of Scripture in our homes act as a shield against the self-deception James warns against? What are practical ways we can sharpen our meditation on the Law of the Lord as a family?

4. The Theology of Trials: We often view trials as obstacles to our peace. According to the sermon, how does reframing our trials as 'divine tests' meant to reveal our reliance on Christ change how we pray for one another in our congregation?

5. Living as Firstfruits: James calls believers 'a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.' How does this identity influence the way we approach our responsibilities in the home, the workplace, and our political engagement? In what specific ways can we act as the 'best of the fruit' in a culture that is drifting further from the truth?



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"Temptation, Sin, & the Goodness of God"
By Pastor Jody May 09/27/2026

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