

## Resisting Temptation

James 1:12-15

Bill Wilson says,

“For the next three months [after Bill met Bob in May of 1935], I [Bill] lived with these two wonderful people [Dr. Bob and his wife Anne] Bill said. “I shall always believe they gave me more than I ever brought them.” Each morning, there was devotion, he recalled. After a long silence, in which they awaited inspiration and guidance (called by Anne, Quite Time), Anne would read from the Bible. “James was our favorite,” he [Bill] said. “Reading from her chair in the corner, she would softly conclude, “Faith without works is dead.” This was a favorite quotation of Anne’s, much as the Book of James was a favorite with early A.A.’s—so much so that “The James Club” was favored by some as a name for the Fellowship.

- Conference Approved - *DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers* (NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980), p. 71.

In his last major address to AAs in 1948, Dr. Bob said,

When we started in on Bill D. [Bill Dotson, A.A. Number Three], we had no Twelve Steps. But we were convinced that the answer to our problems was in the Good Book. To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James.

- (The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Biographical sketches - Their last major talks. NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1972, 1975, pp. 9-10, emphasis added).

In a published pamphlet that came from Dr. Bob’s home group in Akron (archivist believe Dr. Bob wrote or heavily influenced the writing and distribution of this pamphlet) we read,

There is the Bible that you haven't opened for years. Get acquainted with it. Read it with an open mind. You will find things that will amaze you. You will be convinced that certain passages were written with you in mind. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew V, VI, and VII). Read St. Paul's inspired essay on love (I Corinthians XIII). Read the Book of James. Read the Twenty-third and Ninety-first Psalms. These reading are brief but so important. Read "Alcoholics Anonymous" and then read it again. You may find that it contains your own story. It will become your second Bible.

- A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous [A pamphlet published by “AA of Akron,” – AA Group No. 1, Akron, Ohio, 1940 - Dr. Bob's Home Group]

The passage we will study tonight deals with temptation and how we resist temptation. It should surprise no one that AAs of yesterday and of today are interested in resisting temptation, and having the power to do that—the power of God.

We all face trials and temptations. Is there an escape? Is there a way to overcome the trial and temptation? Is there a way that can assure victory and deliverance? James deals with that subject and gives direction for the way to conquer trials and temptations.

### Read James 1:12-15

What do you think it means to “persevere under trial”? (James 1:12)

Persevere means to endure, to be steadfast, to stand firm and to not give in.

What does God promise to the person who “perseveres under trial”?

The word *blessed* means inward and spiritual joy and satisfaction; an inner assurance and confidence that carries one through all the trials and temptations of life no matter the pain, sorrow, loss, or grief. Simply stated, the person is secure in this life. He knows that God is looking after and caring for him and is going to deliver him from all the corruption and evil of this life including death, and give him life eternal. The *crown of life* is eternal life—life that will go on and on, never ending.

What are some things that you are tempted to give in to?

Examine James 4:7-10 (I have included this passage in an Expanded Version). What does James tell us to do when tempted by the devil?

- **James 4:7-10 (EXP)** Place yourselves under God’s authority, give yourselves completely to him, and let him work his will in you. Then, resist the devil, stand firm against him, yell a loud no him, and he will run away from you. (8) Come close to God saying yes to him and he will come close to you. Quit playing around with sin and clean up your lives. Fill your hearts with God alone and He will purify your hearts and minds. Then you will be pure and true to him; your loyalty will not be divided between God and a sinful culture. (9) As you draw near to God, there will be grieving, weeping and sorrow for the way you have lived. When you see what you have done, your laughter will change to sadness and your joy into shame for your sins. It is time to get real serious with God. (10) So, get down on your face before God; it's the only way to get on your feet. Then He will lift

The prescription is not merely to abstain from drinking and go to a meeting.. That’s not in the Book of James. The error occurs when one man fails to submit to God, resist the devil, humble himself in the sight of God, and appropriately believe to be lifted up and out by his Creator.

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9 (included here). What does Peter tell us to do when tempted by the devil?

- **1 Peter 5:8-9 (NCV)** Control yourselves and be careful! The devil, your enemy, goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat. <sup>(9)</sup> Refuse to give in to him, by standing strong in your faith. You know that your Christian family all over the world is having the same kinds of suffering.

Resisting a temptation certainly includes use of willpower, believing, praying, changing behavior and cronies and hangouts. The latter three can be instruments of success or of failure. The first three, with God’s help, are essential to success.

Does God ever tempt us? (James 1:13) Why?

How would you define temptation?

Temptation is the desire and craving for wrong things, things that God forbids and that are harmful to our human bodies and spirits. No matter what it is—even if man justifies and says that it is acceptable—it is sin if

God says that it is wrong and if it harms our bodies and spirits. Therefore, when we feel an urge or craving for such things, we are being tempted, and the temptation is to be fled from.

How are we tempted? (James 1:14)

What are some evil desires we are tempted with? (James 1:14)

What do you think James means when he says we are “dragged away and enticed” by own evil desires?

The picture is this: man has good desires, natural and normal desires. Therefore, when he begins to think about or look at something, he very naturally desires it. His desire is normal behavior. The problem arises when the thing is forbidden or is harmful. If he looks at and thinks about the forbidden or harmful thing, he begins to lust and to be enticed or lured to go after it. This is the very beginning stage of temptation. Man takes his desire and focuses it upon the forbidden or harmful thing. He begins to pay attention to what he should not look at; he begins to think about the things of the flesh and of the world. Thereby he is tempted and drawn away by his own lusts and enticements.

How do we sin when we are faced with temptation? (James 1:15)

James refers to the conception of lust and the birth of sin. The conception of lust is a picture of birth. When a person actually begins to look at and think about the forbidden thing, desire and lust are *conceived* in his mind. He pictures the pleasure of the desire; that is, sin is actually born. Picturing—looking at or thinking about the desire—is sin.

What is the result of sin? (James 1:15)

When the enticement results in lustful [and excessive] thoughts and behavior [such as getting drunk and drunkenness], it can and should be recognized as sin, and sin as the producer of death.

To summarize: temptation begins with the normal and natural desires of man and with his thoughts. A person sees, smells, tastes, hears, touches, or thinks about something—something that is forbidden and harmful—and he fails to turn away and flee from it. It may be something as simple as hearing or listening to suggestive music, thinking about an old relationship, or thinking about the old drinking days. Instead of thinking about other things or getting busy doing something, the person allows his mind to conceive the thing. He pictures the pleasure and begins to desire or lust after it. It can and often leads back to the sin we did not want to do.

While 21<sup>st</sup> century AA does not believe that we can be “cured” from the disease of alcoholism, the early AA’s claimed to be “cured”.

Bill Wilson and Bill Dotson did.

[Bill Dotson] It would be hard to estimate how much A.A. has done for me. I really wanted the program and I wanted to go along with it. I noticed that the others seemed to have such a release, a happiness, a something that I thought a person ought to have. I was trying to find the answer. I knew there was even more, something that I hadn't got, and I remember one day, a week or two after I had come out of the hospital, Bill was over to my house talking to my wife and me. We were eating lunch, and I was listening and trying to find out why they had this release that they seemed to have. Bill looked across at my wife, and said to her, "Henrietta, the Lord has been so wonderful to me, curing me of this terrible disease, that I just want to keep talking about it and telling people." I thought, "I think I have the answer." Bill was very, very grateful that he had been **released from** this terrible thing and he had **given God the credit** for having done it, and he's so grateful about it he wants to tell other people about it. That sentence, "The Lord has been so wonderful to me, curing me of this terrible disease, that I just want to keep telling people about it," has been a sort of a golden text for the A.A. program and for me. (Story of Bill Dotson - Pioneer member of Akron's Group No. 1, the first A.A. group in the world)

Cleveland A.A. pioneer "Abby" had "challenged" Bill Wilson to tell him about A.A. and "to talk about 'this cure, this group of rummies'." Abby told Bill he "wanted to know what this was that worked so many wonders." In Abby's own words: "and hanging over the mantel was a picture of Gethsemane and Bill pointed to it and said, 'There it is'" (Big Book, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 216-17; Mitch K., *How It Worked*, pp. 138-39). This "picture of Gethsemane" was, of course, a portrayal of Jesus whose transforming power and accomplishments had worked so many signs, miracles, and wonders-as reported in the Bible (e.g. John 20:30; Mark 16:17-20; John 2:11; Acts 2:22, 43).

The AAs' medicine is God and God alone. This is their discovery .... It is free as air with this provision: that the patients it cures have to nearly die before they can bring themselves to take it (*Volume II: Best of the Grapevine*, pp. 202-03)

Cured does not mean that you will not face temptation and that you can not give into the sin of drinking again. It means that the obsession to drink has been removed by God. You still have free will and choice in the matter. You can choose to drink if you want to.

Dick B. writes,

To be “cured,” I believe we need to recognize that temptation to disobey God is common, that thoughts about letting the temptation make a nest in our mind and motivate our behavior must be and can be cast out. They need to be resisted. They need to be expelled. And we need to believe what God says—we are submit ourselves to God; resist the devil; and be assured that the devil will flee, that God will lift us up, and that we can escape and bear the temptation with the help of our faithful Creator.