



# MULTIPLYING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## Study Notes by Thomas Hale

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### TEMPTED TO SIN (BY SPIROS ZODHIATES)

**James 1:14** But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

1. The verse starts with the Greek word *hékastos*, which could be better translated as “each one.” But “each one” is drawn to sin, is tempted by something that is within him. Here James stresses the individuality of the human race. You cannot blame God for your desire to sin; you cannot blame the circumstances of life; you cannot even blame Satan or those who assist him in this business of temptation.
  - Each one is characterized by what we call the idiosyncrasy of his own nature. Just as there is a physical idiosyncrasy, there is also a moral one. There may be two Christians looking at the same tempting thing. One falls for it and the other resists it. What makes the difference? The attitude of each one individually.
  - Nothing from without is able to bring sin into any will. Shall we go back to our classic example of the temptation of Eve? Who was ultimately to blame for her sin? It was not the tree; it was not even Satan; it was not God, but it was her own self. There was a great battle between her will and her imagination, and finally the curiosity of her imagination prompted her will to sin. Is there anything which God has created bad in itself? Not as long as we adhere to the Creator’s prescribed use of it. Good misused becomes evil.
  - We must always remember this fundamental truth. God deals with you individually and you come to God individually. A healthy person may be forbidden to take a certain drug which is a must for a sick person. For the one, its use is prohibited, but for the other it is commanded. What makes the difference? The condition of the individual. It is what is in you that determines the use of what is outside you.

2. The verb “tempted” here is to be understood as having the same meaning as in the previous verse, the solicitation to sin, the inner desire to do that which is contrary to the Law of God laid down for you as an individual.
- “But each one is tempted by his own lust.”
  - I hesitate to say that I am satisfied with this translation because of the necessity of a careful examination of the Greek word translated “lust.” In the Greek language it is *epithumía*. The English word “lust” is almost always associated with the bodily appetites and lasciviousness, whereas the Greek *epithumía* is rather associated with the desire of the soul, which is the moving force of that which pertains to the body. It is an ardent desire, the inclination of the soul to enjoy or to acquire something. In its verbal form it means “to set one’s heart upon a thing, to long for, to covet, to desire.”
  - The root of the word is *thumós*, which means “the soul or spirit as the principle of life, feeling, thought, mind, will, and purpose.” Why go into all this detail as to the meaning of this word? Simply to show that we cannot blame the weakness of the flesh, which God created, as the responsible factor in inducing us to sin. It is the spirit of man; it is the voluntary attitude of man; it is the mental imagination of the pleasure of sin that is condemned in the Scriptures, and not only the actual physical performance thereof. This is just what our Lord meant in the Sermon on the Mount. Watch your inner disposition, your inner attitude. You can commit sin simply by looking and wishing, simply by thinking and imagining. The sins of omission and commission are bad, but the worst sins are those of disposition.
  - “But each one is tempted by his own desire of the soul” would really be a perfect translation of this verse.
  - The diagnosis is now made. Sin is something that begins with the desire of the heart. The remedy, therefore, is not casting away parts of your body or secluding your body in a monastery, but purifying and sublimating your inner desire, cleansing the heart by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. The preposition which is here translated “by” is not the same as in verse 13. It is *hupó* which indicates the direct agent and responsible factor. In other words, James declares that the primary factor in the desire to sin is not God, is not the outer temptation or trial, but the inner disposition of the soul. In the case of the boy who was forbidden to swim, he had the desire to do so, and to help fulfill that desire he took his swimming trunks with him. Even innocent things often arouse these evil

desires. Pure hearts make for pure hands, pure eyes, pure mouths; and, of course, the contrary is true: an impure soul is primarily responsible for murderous hands, evil looks, false and lying lips.

4. Two participles close this verse. The first is **exelkómenos** which is derived from the preposition *ex*, which means “out of,” and the verb **hélkomai**, which in its metaphorical sense, as here used, would mean “to be drawn by inward power, to be led, to be impelled.”
  - You remember the words of the Master, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32)? The scoffer tells us that He was lifted up, but He did not draw all men unto Himself. There are multitudes who are far away from Him. The word “draw” used here is the same root word used by James. What the Lord really meant was that He would attract people, not by force but by His grace and love. Love woos, love wins; it never forces anybody to follow it. So it is with evil and sin. It is attractive, it is wooing, it is winsome. Watch it.
  - This, of course, refers to the struggle which the born-again Christian has within his soul. The moment that he believed and accepted Christ as his own personal Savior, divine nature took its seat in his heart. There was created within him a new set of desires and aspirations. But the old Adamic nature was not put out of commission. It was suppressed, it was defeated; nevertheless, it was still there. But how does this old nature begin to work? By wooing you to a pleasant thought of committing sin.
  - And immediately there comes into the picture the next participle, **deleazómenos** which means “being baited or deceived.” Inside you there is created the desire to enjoy the attraction of sin, and when the opportunity arises, you are caught. You have often heard the expression, “He is hooked.” Well, here it is. You are in danger of being hooked when before you there appears something which promises to satisfy your inner yearning. Within you there is the desire to enjoy married life and a family. This inner desire, however, can be exploited by someone who comes along and tries to pose as the one who can satisfy that inner desire. Be careful, says James, in effect. Do not get hooked by that which you can see, the bait. There may be something hidden which could translate your inner desire into sin.

Zodhiates, S. (1999). *Faith, love, & hope: An exposition of the epistle of James (electronic ed., Jas 1:14)*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.