

James 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Analysis

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: James distinguishes trials from temptations to sin. God cannot be tempted (apeirastos, ἀπείραστος) by evil nor does He tempt (peirazei, πειράζει) anyone. The same Greek root peirasmos describes external testing, but James insists God is never the author of sin. The issue lies in human response.

This preserves God's holiness: He ordains trials for our good but never injects evil desires. Reformed orthodoxy teaches secondary causes—God sovereignly governs all yet remains unstained, while humans bear responsibility. James counters fatalistic excuses and defends the character of the Father of lights (1:17). By clarifying God's purity, he guides believers to confess their own desires rather than blaming divine providence for moral failure.

Historical Context

Jewish tradition sometimes attributed temptation to God as a test akin to Abraham's trial. James corrects misinterpretations circulating among diaspora Christians who might have used persecution as justification for sin. His teaching aligns with Paul's assertion that God provides a way of escape in temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Under pressure from hostile authorities, some may have rationalized compromise. James asserts that the holy God of Israel revealed fully in Christ is never complicit in evil, urging believers to guard their hearts.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does James's view of God's holiness confront excuses you make for sin?
2. What strategies help you expose and confess desires before they entice?
3. Who can you invite into your fight against temptation this week?

Interlinear Text

μηδεις	πειράζει	λεγέτω	ὅτι	Ἀπὸ	τοῦ	θεὸς	πειράζει
no man	I am tempted	Let	G3754	of	G3588	God	I am tempted
G3367	G3985	G3004		G575		G2316	G3985
ὁ	γὰρ	θεὸς	ἀπείραστός	ἐστιν	κακῶν	πειράζει	δὲ
G3588	for	God	cannot be tempted	G2076	with evil	I am tempted	neither
	G1063	G2316	G551		G2556	G3985	G1161
αὐτὸς	οὐδένα						
G846	any man						
	G3762						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 3:12 (Parallel theme): And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

James 1:12 (Parallel theme): Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

James 1:2 (Parallel theme): My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Isaiah 63:17 (Parallel theme): O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

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