

**6 Week Sermon Series**: Recognizing the Line Between Good and Evil

**Sermon 4:** The 7 Deadly Sins

**Date**: Sunday September 4,2016

**Scripture**: James 1:13-15

**Things I’d Like to Remember from Today’s Sermon**

1. **Remember** who you are. You are someone’s husband or wife. You are someone’s dad or mom. You are a child of God, person of worth.
2. **Recognize** the consequences of your actions. Will I be more free or enslaved by this. Who will be hurt by my actions. Fantasize about the worst possible outcome instead of the “best.”
3. **Rededicate** yourself to God. Stop, drop, and pray.
4. **Reveal** your struggle to a trusted friend. Confess your sins to one another and pray that you might be healed.
5. **Remove** yourself from the situation. Pluck out your eye. No, not really. But the point remains. Get out of there. Stop attending the situation.

**Daily Study Guide**

**MONDAY September 5, 2016 James 1:9-18 “Everyone is tempted by their own cravings”**

Some Scripture stories show temptations coming from outside us (e.g. Jesus’ temptation—cf. Matthew 4:1-11).

But James (probably Jesus' half-brother) knew that often our own inner wishes and wants lead us away from God’s path. This is why so many great Christians through the centuries have practiced and taught disciplines (e.g. meditation, journaling, spiritual direction, counseling) that help us to know ourselves clearly and honestly.

• The first of Pastor Ruffin’s “5 Rs for Resisting Temptation” is “Remember who you are—you are a child of God and a follower of Jesus Christ!” In what ways can inner “cravings” you don’t even know are there (e.g. for power, popularity, wealth) keep you f rom remembering your identity as a child of God? What disciplines have you chosen to help you know yourself better, so that you can increasingly live into your identity as a follower of Christ?

• James (unlike some preachers since!) did not only talk about the bad results of temptation, he also pointed to the good results of staying on God’s path: “Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above ... from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights” (verse 17). What good gifts have you experienced when you’ve lived out God’s principles for human life?

**Prayer:** Generous God, thank you for the good and perfect gifts you've sent into my life. Draw my heart and walk

with me as I grow more aware of the cravings that tempt me away from you. Amen.

**TUESDAY September 6, 2016 Luke 22:31-34, 39-46 “Pray that you won’t give in to temptation”**

Self-preservation (a basic human instinct) led the disciples to deny Jesus, even though he’d warned them that they would scatter and abandon him. They had not yet fully grasped (as later, facing martyrdom, they showed they had) that they were safer with Jesus than away from him, no matter what happened. As we deepen our faith that in God we’re always ultimately safe, stress will be less able to override that trust in our lives.

• Physical martyrdom was a more immediate risk for the apostles than it is for residents of the USA today. God does not want us to be self-destructive, but at times serving God still brings risks, social or economic if not physical. What factors related to self-preservation "sift" your faith most strongly, and tug you away from your allegiance to Jesus? How can you discern when self-preservation is luring you away from God?

• Jesus warned his followers that they would be tested, severely. He urged them to pray that they wouldn't give in to temptation. Can you think of circumstances that are difficult or impossible to avoid that you know will test your allegiance to Jesus and his ways? In what ways can anticipating such temptations improve your chances of resisting them?

**Prayer**: Lord God, sometimes temptation takes me by surprise. Sometimes I know it is coming. Give me wisdom to discern how to avoid temptation if I can, and to be ready to meet it in your strength if I can't. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY September 7, 2016 Luke 8:4-8, 11-15 Falling away or bearing fruit?**

“Everyone who has ears should pay attention,” Jesus said (verse 8). This “No-Duh!” sentence is actually key. One of Pastor Ruffin’s “5 Rs” is “Recognize the consequences of your action.” In Jesus' story, each type of “soil” produced different consequences—and we choose, minute by minute, day by day, what type of “soil” we are. Temptation repeatedly tugs us to fall away from God, but paying attention to God’s word keeps us choosing to be “good soil.”

• Jesus' parable pointed to a significant reality: just hearing truth is not the key to spiritual growth and understanding. The seed (God’s word) landed on all four types of soil. Since all four types of hearers Jesus identified in verses 11-15 heard the word, what made the difference in the results it produced in their lives? What things are you paying the most attention to? In what ways are they helping you become “good soil”?

• Think of times in your life when you could have been described as being like seed on the path (hear the word, but it stays on the surface and gets lost), on rock (no roots—didn’t last), among thorny plants (choked by concerns, riches, pleasures—fruit didn’t mature), and good soil (heard the word, committed yourself to it with an upright heart and bore fruit). Has your progress come in a straight line, or does it zigzag? How does the grace of God—the God of fresh starts—help you keep becoming better soil?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, thank you for sowing the seed of your word in my life. Help me to more and more be good soil, in which your word can bears fruit to bless others. Amen.

**THURSDAY September 8, 2016 1 Timothy 6:5-11 Temptation: trapped by many stupid and harmful passions**

God calls us to find “great profit” in “holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance and gentleness.” To value money above these traits skews our values and leads us away from the qualities God says are truly profitable. The Apostle Paul, Timothy’s mentor, guided this young leader as he battled against false teachers and false values in his church.

• In verse 5 Paul wrote, "(The false teachers) think that godliness is a way to make money!" Many scholars believe the false teachers were teaching that godliness guarantees wealth. But godliness is about growing in your love for God and your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40), becoming more and more the kind of person God made you to be. Prayerfully examine your heart today. What are your motivations for living a godly life?

• Verse 10 said money itself is not evil; the "love of money" is the problem. But like Timothy, we’re surrounded by voices designed to entice us to love money. As scholar N. T. Wright said, "Every advertisement, every other television program, many movies and most political manifestos are designed, by subtle and not-so-subtle ways, to make us say, ‘If only I had just a bit more money, then I would be content.'" What steps can you take today to resist the temptation to look to money for happiness, fulfillment and security?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, thank you for being my ultimate mentor, guide and accountability partner. Teach me to value what you value—and to see money primarily as a resource to serve you and the world. Amen.

**FRIDAY September 9, 2016 Galatians 5:24 – 6:4 Tempted people helping tempted people**

A key part of Christian life (one we often shrink from) is honestly, caringly helping each other deal with temptation. Paul knew this task is delicate, and urged the Galatians to restore one who is doing wrong “with a spirit of gentleness.” He also knew we can only help as fellow strugglers, writing, “Watch out for yourselves so you won’t be tempted too.” In that spirit, another of Pastor Hamilton’s “5 Rs” is “Reveal your struggle to a trusted friend who will hold you accountable.” It can be crucial to know that others who have earned your trust are with you.

• The great Christian Ignatius Loyola taught that it is impossible to grow spiritually unless we are willing to grow emotionally. (Peter Scazzero’s excellent book Emotionally Healthy Spirituality applies that principle well to today’s settings.) What makes emotional growth so vital to your ability to earn the right to offer gentle correction to someone else? How does it affect your ability to accept direction and accountability from another trustworthy Christian?

• What attitude(s) does this passage urge each of us to have? What attitude(s) does it urge us to grow beyond? Based on where you were a year ago, how would you assess your progress in growing toward the healthy, helpful attitudes? What growth areas can you identify as “next up” in your journey?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, it’s hard to see myself suggesting a course correction to someone else. Teach me what this passage means for my life today. Give me the courage to open myself to others, and to offer grace, wisdom and generosity to others who trust me. Amen.

**SATURDAY September 10, 2016 Hebrews 2:14-18 “He’s able to help those who are being tempted”**

In the end, all any temptation can do, whether from inside our self or outside, is to suggest. It cannot force us to act. Central to Pastor Ruffin’s “5 Rs,” with the same message as this passage from Hebrews, is “Rededicate yourself to God through prayer—stop, in the midst of the temptation, and pray, asking for God's help and strength.” Jesus faced temptation and won, and is always eager to help us.

• How would you compare the kind and intensity of the temptations Christ faced with the ones you face? Have there been times when another person has been able to help you because you share a common experience? In what ways has Christ already helped you to erode ways of thinking about yourself that create inner urges leading you away from God? What obstacles are you facing now that Christ’s strength and grace could help you surmount, clearing space in which you can live into a freer, healthier, more loving way of being?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, every temptation I face says in some way that my life would be better if I ignored your ways.

So I join Julian of Norwich in praying, “God, of your goodness, give me yourself, for you are enough to me." Amen.