

• *The danger of self deception*

• *The answer to temptation is to know that we need never fear*

3. How to overcome temptation

(i) *Recognize it and accept responsibility for dealing with it*

(ii) *He asks us to trust in the goodness of God*

(iii) *We have a new nature*

(iv) *God gives us His word*

(v) *Victory in practical terms*

• *Godly living is the purpose of the new birth*

What is new birth?

We are considering the danger of self-deception. When we are tempted to steal it is because we are not sure God will provide for us. When we are tempted into a wrong relationship it is because we fear God will not give us friendship and love. When we are tempted to gossip it is because we doubt whether God can handle the sins of others. When we are tempted into the sin of anxiety it is because we are not learning to cast all of our cares upon Him. The answer to temptation is to know that we need never fear. Every good thing is given to us by God. But God will only give what is good; He will never support our sins. We can trust Him to meet our needs and to satisfy every longing of our heart.

3. **James tells us how to overcome temptation.** How does James help us here in this passage to overcome temptation?

(i) He has asked us to recognize temptation and accept responsibility for dealing with it^{□1}. We must become aware of these steps down into destruction and realize that Satan is resistible. We are not to be deceived into blaming anyone but ourselves^{□2}.

(ii) He asks us to trust in the goodness of God. *‘Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows’*^{□1}. The devil plays on our desires, but God is willing to give us the desires of our heart. God is good. He will not give us anything evil; He will not lead us in an evil direction. The devil plays on our desires to get us to sin. God will give us the desires of our heart without sin. Jesus lived on ‘every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’. This means that He lived on what God decided about Him. God is entirely good. He is ‘Father of the heavenly lights’. Everything that is signified by light: joy, illumination, understanding, cleanness, purity – such things come from God. He cannot change in the way that a shadow moves as the sun turns. He is not in one position at one time and in another position at another time. One will never find God supporting or encouraging sin. His holiness is unvarying and incorruptible.

(iii) James reminds us that God gives the new birth which enables us to resist sin^{□1}. We are able to deal with temptation. We have the Holy Spirit. We have a new nature.

(iv) He will go on to remind us that God gives us His word which rescues us from our sinful ways^{□1}. God wants us to live on what He says to us.

(v) He shows us what victory over temptation will mean in practical terms^{□1}.

The secret of godly living is the new birth; and the purpose of the new birth is godly living. *‘He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of-first-fruits of all he created’*^{□1}.

What is the new birth? What does it mean to be born again? I can tell you what it is not! It is not religiousness or respectability. It is not the habit of church-going. It is not saying prayers and trying to be good – although of course there is nothing wrong with any of those things. Yet the new birth is something different from religiosity.

□1 1:13-15

□2 1:16

□1 1:17

□1 1:18

□1 1:19-25

□1 1:26-27

□1 1:18

• *God makes us new people*

The term 'new birth' is used. It is picture language. Just as in one's ordinary birth something new comes into being, and a new person enters the world, so when a person comes to salvation new spiritual life enters into us. We become new people altogether^{□1}. A turn-around in our lives takes place because God makes us new people. We become what we never were before.

□1 see also John 1:12-13; 3:1-8; 1 Peter 1:23

• *We 'come alive' to God*
• *We are newly created*

There are other ways of expressing the matter. Sometimes the Scriptures will say we 'come alive' to God. We are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life^{□1}. Or sometimes the Bible will speak of someone being newly created^{□2}. New birth is new life, spiritual resurrection, new creation. As a result of this new life of the Holy Spirit within us we have spiritual understanding, a desire for holiness, faith in God and His word that we never had before. This new birth breaks the power of sin in us.

□1 Ephesians 2:1-7
□2 2 Corinthians 5:17

• *The new birth breaks the power of sin in us*

How does new birth take place?

How does this new birth take place? There are different aspects to the matter. The apostle John especially likes to mention the work of the Holy Spirit in new birth. James and the apostle Peter like to mention the part that the word of God plays. New birth takes place when the word of God pierces our sinful hearts. Our hearts are opened to receive God's word^{□1}. It is the power of God's word coming to us and makes us new people and gives us new birth.

□1 see Acts 16:14

• *The Holy Spirit and the Word of God*

The purpose of new birth

The purpose of new birth is mentioned by James. It is given to us 'that we might be a kind of first-fruits ...'. The 'first-fruits' in the Old Testament were the choicest part of the flock or the harvest which was totally dedicated to God. This is the purpose of God's giving us new life: that we might be the best part of God's creation, totally dedicated to Him. Men and women were meant to be the greatest part of God's creation.

• *To be the best part of God's creation – totally dedicated to Him*

• *So that we can handle temptation*

The new birth is given us so that we can handle temptation. This is James' main point. We are born again. We have a power to live for God, and a desire to live for God, that others do not have. We have new life by the Holy Spirit. We have a new nature. We have access to God. We have new desires. The new birth is the only way to live a godly life.



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