

James Chapter 1 – Trials and Temptations

James 1:2-27

I. Trials and Temptations – James 1

Introduction

This section transitions from the topic of trials to that of temptations. But it should not be completely separated from the section above. Moo – “Every trial brings temptation. Financial difficulty can tempt us to question God’s providence in our lives. The death of a loved one can tempt us to question God’s love for us. The suffering of the righteous poor and the ease of the wicked rich can tempt us to question God’s justice, or even his existence. Thus testing almost always includes temptation, and temptation is itself a test.”

B. Internal Temptations

Passage

Here is the text for this section:

James 1:13-18 – ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

<1:13> μηδείς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι Ἐκ τῆς θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα. <1:14> ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος· <1:15> εἴτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον.

<1:16> Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. <1:17> πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἀνωθέν ἐστὶν καταβαίνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φῶτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα. <1:18> βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων.

<1:19> Ἴστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδύς εἰς ὀργὴν· <1:20> ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται. <1:21> διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας ἐν πραύτητι, δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν.

1. Where do temptations come from?: Vs. 13-15

James 1:13-15 – ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

<1:13> μηδείς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι Ἐκ τῆς θεοῦ πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν, πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα. <1:14> ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος· <1:15> εἴτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον.

Let no one say (Imperative!(7)) –

Seventh imperative by verse 13!

When he is tempted –

Just like in verse 2, James doesn’t say, “if” you are tempted, but “when” you are tempted!

3985 πειραζω peirazo pi-rad'-zo

from 3984; TDNT - 6:23,822; v

KJV - tempt 29, try 4, tempter 2, prove 1, assay 1, examine 1, go about 1; 39

1) to try whether a thing can be done

1a) to attempt, endeavour

2) to try, make trial of, test: for the purpose of ascertaining his quality, or what he thinks, or how he will behave himself

2a) in a good sense

2b) in a bad sense, to test one maliciously, craftily to put to the proof his feelings or judgments

2c) to try or test one's faith, virtue, character, by enticement to sin

2c1) to solicit to sin, to tempt

1c1a) of the temptations of the devil

2d) after the OT usage

2d1) of God: to inflict evils upon one in order to prove his character and the steadfastness of his faith

2d2) men are said to tempt God by exhibitions of distrust, as though they wished to try whether he is not justly distrusted

2d3) by impious or wicked conduct to test God's justice and patience, and to challenge him, as it were to give proof of his perfections.

This root shows up four times in verse 13, and as we have discussed already, it is the same word used in the previous section translated “trial.”

Evil –

2556 κακος kakos kak-os'

apparently a primary word; TDNT - 3:469,391; adj

KJV - evil 40, evil things 3, harm 2, that which is evil + 3458 2, wicked 1, ill 1, bad 1, noisome 1; 51

1) of a bad nature

1a) not such as it ought to be

2) of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting

2a) base, wrong, wicked

3) troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful

For Synonyms see entry 5908

See definition for κακος 2556

See definition for πονηρος 4190

See definition for φαυλος 5337

These words may be used with very little distinction of meaning, but often the difference is marked. κακος frequently means evil rather negatively, referring to the absence of the qualities which constitute a person or thing what it should be or what it claims to be. It is also used meaning evil in a moral sense. It is a general antithesis to αγαθος.

πονηρος is a word at once stronger and more active, it means mischief-making, delighting in injury, doing evil to others, dangerous, destructive. κακος describes the quality according to its nature, πονηρος, according to its effects.

φαυλος is the bad chiefly as the worthless, the good for nothing.

“Morally base and degrading” – Lenski

God cannot be tempted by evil, because there is no lust in him. See verse 14 below. He has no lust that can be tempted, and he has no desire for us to sin.

God cannot be tempted to do evil, and it would be evil to tempt others to do evil. Vaughan – “Action of this sort would imply a certain delight in evil which is contrary to the divine nature.”

He does not tempt anyone –

Moo – “The OT often makes clear that God himself brings trials into the lives of his people.” Gen. 22:1 – “God tested Abraham.” And many others.

“But while God may test or prove his servants in order to strengthen their faith, he never seeks to induce sin and destroy their faith.”

Wouldn't it be awful if God tempted us? To whom would we go for help?

Carried away, drawn away –

Lured

1828 εξελκω exelko ex-el'-ko

from 1537 and 1670; v

KJV - draw away 1; 1

1) to draw out

2) metaph. lure forth: in hunting and fishing as game is lured from its hiding place, so man by lure is allured from the safety of self-restraint to sin. In Jas 1:14, the language of the hunting is transferred to the seduction of a harlot.

Lured, like a fisherman does with bait. Like a harlot does with her wares.

Enticed –

James continues his fishing metaphor.

1185 δελεαζω deleazo del-eh-ad'-zo

from the base of 1388; v

KJV - entice 1, beguile 1, allure 1; 3

1) to bait, catch by a bait

2) metaph. to beguile by blishments, allure, entice, deceive

Moo – “The bait on the fisherman's hook would entice the fish; and, once hooked, the fish would be dragged away.”

Tasker – “The imagery is that of a fish swimming in a straight course and then drawn off toward something that seems attractive, only to discover that the bait has a deadly hook in it.”

His own –

James inserts this word just to hammer home the point below.

2398 ιδιος idios id'-ee-os

of uncertain affinity;; adj

KJV - his own 48, their own 13, privately 8, apart 7, your own 6, his 5, own 5, not tr 1, misc 20; 113

1) pertaining to one's self, one's own, belonging to one's self.

Blomberg and Kamell – “What one person finds as intense temptation another person may never experience as even a faint enticement, and vice-versa. Temptations are tailored to the individual, and so we as believers must never belittle a person for struggling with something we think of as inane.”

Lust, desire –

Fleshly, illicit desire

1939 επιθυμια epithumia ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah

from 1937; TDNT - 3:168,339; n f

KJV - lust 31, concupiscence 3, desire 3, lust after 1; 38

1) desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust

For Synonyms see entry 5845 & 5906

Synonyms

See Definition for επιθυμια

1939

See Definition for παθος

3806

3806 represents the passive, 1939 the active side of vice;
1939 is more comprehensive in meaning than 3806; 1939 is
(evil) desire, 3806 is ungovernable desire.

Desire, Lust.

See definition for επιθυμια 1939
See definition for παθος 3806
See definition for ορμη 3730
See definition for ορεξις 3715

επιθυμια is the broadest of these words. Its meaning may be good, but it is usually bad. It denotes any natural desire or appetite, usually with the implication that it is a depraved desire.

παθος has not as broad a meaning as in classical Greek, but denotes evil desire, chiefly, however, as a condition of the soul rather than in active operation.

ορμη indicates hostile motion toward an object, either for seizing or repelling.

ορεξις is a desire or appetite, especially seeking the object of gratification in order to make it one's own.

Moo – “The word often carries for us a sexual connotation (and it has this sense in the NT), but it usually has a broader meaning, including any human longing for what God has prohibited.”

Wiersbe – “The normal desires of life were given to us by God, and, of themselves, are not sinful. Without these desires, we could not function. Unless we felt hunger and thirst, we would never eat and drink, and we would die. Without fatigue, the body would never rest and would eventually wear out. Sex is a normal desire; without it the human race could not continue.

It is when we want to satisfy these desires in ways outside God's will that we get into trouble. Eating is normal; gluttony is sin. Sleep is normal; laziness is sin.” Sex within marriage is normal; Adultery is sin.

Blomberg and Kamell – “Any intense longing for an improper object, that is, anything that gets in the way of our pursuit of God.”

Summary of verse 14:

From the very beginning it has been the immediate response of mankind to blame God or someone else for our own sin.

Genesis 3:12-13 – ¹²And the man said, “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The point of this verse is to remove any possibility of blaming our sin on something or someone else. Moo – “James ... wants to place the responsibility for temptation and sin squarely on the shoulders of each human being.”

Bengel – “Even the suggestions of the devil do not occasion danger, before they are made ‘our own’.”

John Adam – “Persons and objects act on the corrupt heart, stir up its propensities, fan the flame of passion, present all kinds of opportunities for and incitements to sinful indulgence. But they put nothing into us, they only bring out what was in us all along.”

Has conceived –

James moves now to the metaphor of conception and birth.

4815 συλλαμβανω sullambano sool-lam-ban'-o

from 4862 and 2983; TDNT - 7:759,1101; v

KJV - take 8, conceive 5, help 2, catch 1; 16

1) to seize, take: one as prisoner

2) to conceive, of a woman

2a) metaph. of lust whose impulses a man indulges

3) to seize for one's self

3a) in a hostile sense, to make (one a permanent) prisoner

4) to take hold together with one, to assist, help, to succour

Note that the word translated “lust” above is feminine.

Gives birth, brings forth –

5088 τικω tikto tik'-to

a strengthened form of a primary τεκω teko tek'-o (which is used only as alternate in certain tenses);; v

KJV - bring forth 9, be delivered 5, be born 3, be in travail 1, bear 1; 19

1) to bring forth, bear, produce (fruit from the seed)

1a) of a woman giving birth

1b) of the earth bringing forth its fruits

1c) metaph. to bear, bring forth

Sin –

266 αμαρτια hamartia ham-ar-tee'-ah

from 264; TDNT - 1:267,44; n f

KJV - sin 172, sinful 1, offense 1; 174

1) equivalent to 264

1a) to be without a share in

1b) to miss the mark

1c) to err, be mistaken

1d) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honour, to do or go wrong

1e) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin

2) that which is done wrong, sin, an offence, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act

3) collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many

For Synonyms see entry [5879](#)
Synonyms for Sin.

See definition for αμαρτια	266
See definition for αμαρτημα	265
See definition for ασεβεια	763
See definition for παρακοη	3876
See definition for ανομια	458
See definition for παρανομια	3892
See definition for παραβασις	3847
See definition for παραπτωμα	3900
See definition for αγνοημα	51
See definition for ητημα	2275

αμαρτια meant originally the missing of a mark. When applied to moral things the idea is similar, it is missing the true end of life, and so it is used as a general term for sin. It means both the act of sinning and the result, the sin itself.

αμαρτημα means only the sin itself, not the act, in its particular manifestations as separate deeds of disobedience to a divine law.

ασεβεια is ungodliness, positive and active irreligion, a condition of direct opposition to God.

παρακοη is strictly failing to hear, or hearing carelessly and inattentively. The sin is in this failure to hear when God speaks, and also in the active disobedience which ordinarily follows.

ανομια is lawlessness, contempt of law, a condition or action not simply without law, as the etymology might indicate, but contrary to law. The law is usually by implication the Mosaic law.

παρανομια occurs only once, 2Pe 2:16, and is practically equivalent to anomia.

παραβασις is transgression, the passing beyond some assigned limit. It is the breaking of a distinctly recognized commandment. It consequently means more than amartia.

παραπτωμα is used in different senses, sometimes in a milder sense, denoting an error, a mistake, a fault; and sometimes meaning a trespass, a willful sin.

αγνοημα occurs only once, Heb 9:7. It indicates error, sin which to a certain extent is the result of ignorance.

ητημα denotes being worsted, defeated. In an ethical sense it means a failure in duty, a fault.

All these different words may occasionally but not usually be used simply to describe the same act from different points of view. The fundamental meanings of these words may well be summed up in the language of Trench:

Sin "may be regarded as the missing of a mark or aim: it is then αμαρτια or αμαρτημα; the overpassing or transgressing of a line: it is then παραβασις; the disobedience to a voice: in which case it is παρακοη; the falling where one should have stood upright: this will be

παραπτωμα; ignorance of what one ought to have known: this will be αγνοημα; diminishing of that which should have been rendered in full measure, which is ητημα; non-observance of a law, which is anomia or παρανομια."

Moo – "Only when *desire* "conceives" – is allowed to produce offspring – does sin come into being." **Being tempted is not a sin. It becomes sin when we act on it.**

Moo – "Christian maturity is not indicated by the infrequency of temptation but by the infrequency of succumbing to temptation."

Accomplished, finished –

He completes the birth metaphor here: "full grown"

658 αποτελεω apoteleo ap-ot-el-eh'-o
from [575](#) and [5055](#); v

KJV - finish 1; 1

1) to perfect, to bring quite to an end

2) accomplish

Brings forth –

616 αποκυεω apokueo ap-ok-oo-eh'-o
from [575](#) and the base of [2949](#); v

KJV - bring forth 1, begat 1; 2

1) to bring forth

1a) from the womb

1b) give birth to

2) produce

Death –

Spiritual

2288 θανατος thanatos than'-at-os
from [2348](#); TDNT - 3:7,312; n m

KJV - death 117, deadly 2; 119

1) the death of the body

1a) that separation (whether natural or violent) of the soul and the body by which the life on earth is ended

1b) with the implied idea of future misery in hell

1b1) the power of death

1c) since the nether world, the abode of the dead, was conceived as being very dark, it is equivalent to the region of thickest darkness i.e. figuratively, a region enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and sin

2) metaph., the loss of that life which alone is worthy of the name,

2a) the misery of the soul arising from sin, which begins on earth but lasts and increases after the death of the body in hell

3) the miserable state of the wicked dead in hell

4) in the widest sense, death comprising all the miseries arising from

sin, as well physical death as the loss of a life consecrated to God and blessed in him on earth, to be followed by wretchedness in hell

The wages of sin is death.

Conclusion of verses 13-15:

Remember our charge for 2016: Ministry, Leadership, and Personal Holiness

Ps. 51:1-13 – ¹(For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him,) (after he had gone in to Bathsheba.) Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, And blameless when Thou dost judge. ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. ⁶Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom.

⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice. ⁹Hide Thy face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit. ¹³Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, And sinners will be converted to Thee.

When we sin, there is no one to blame but ourselves. And we must go to God and confess our sin to Him.

2. Reiteration of the Goodness of God Vs. 16-18

James 1:16-18 – ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

<1:16> Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί. <1:17> πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἀνωθέν ἐστὶν καταβαίνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φῶτων, παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα. <1:18> βουλευθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων.

Do not be deceived (Imperative!(8)) –

Eighth imperative by verse 16!

4105 πλανᾶω planao plan-ah'-o
from 4106; TDNT - 6:228,857; v

KJV - deceive 24, err 6, go astray 5, seduce 2, wander 1, be out of the

way 1; 39

1) to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way
1a) to go astray, wander, roam about
2) metaph.

2a) to lead away from the truth, to lead into error, to deceive

2b) to be led into error

2c) to be led aside from the path of virtue, to go astray, sin

2d) to sever or fall away from the truth

2d1) of heretics

2e) to be led away into error and sin

This word is the root of the word “planet”, a wandering star. Thus one who wanders from the truth.

Don't think incorrectly about God and His character! “James therefore does not want his readers to make any mistake about what he is about to say about God as the source of all good gifts.” – Moo

Why might James' audience be deceived? _____

Vouga suggests that both trials and temptations can be an opportunity to cast aspersion on the character of God. “When [James'] readers are caught in the throes of evil conditions it will not do to blame either God or others or to resign all hope in a fatalistic way. Individual accountability is at the root of the matter; and God's goodness and providence in both creation and the new creation are the two emphases our author insists on.” – Martin

Good –

18 αγαθος agathos ag-ath-os'

a primary word; TDNT - 1:10,3; adj

KJV - good 77, good thing 14, that which is good + 3588 8, the thing which is good + 3588 1, well 1, benefit 1; 102

1) of good constitution or nature

2) useful, salutary

3) good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy

4) excellent, distinguished

5) upright, honourable

Thing bestowed, gift –

“Every good giving...”

1394 δοσις dosis dos'-is

from the base of 1325;; n f

KJV - giving 1, gift 1; 2

1) a giving

2) a gift

For Synonyms see entry 5839

Synonyms

- See Definition for δομα 1390
See Definition for δοσις 1394
See Definition for δωρεα 1431
See Definition for δωρον 1435

1390 refers to giving or a thing given, cf. a medical dose. 1435 refers to a present yet not always gratuitous or wholly unsuggestive of recompence; 1431 differs from 1435 in denoting a gift which is also a gratuity, hence of the gift of a sovereign. **1394 is what God confers as a possessor of all things.**

This root ties back to verse 5, "the giving God".

Perfect –

James uses this word a lot!!!

- 5046 τελειος teleios tel'-i-os
from 5056; TDNT - 8:67,1161; adj
KJV - perfect 17, man 1, of full age 1; 19
1) brought to its end, finished
2) wanting nothing necessary to completeness
3) perfect
4) that which is perfect
4a) consummate human integrity and virtue
4b) of men
4b1) full grown, adult, of full age, mature

The repetition of the idea of a gift is more likely a style than two different nuances of meaning.

Gift –

- 1434 δωρημα dorema do'-ray-mah
from 1433; TDNT - 2:166,166; n n
KJV - gift 2; 2
1) a gift, bounty, benefactionn

The repetition of the idea of a gift is more likely a style than two different nuances of meaning. This could have been a saying already known to the readers, or perhaps even a phrase from a hymn of the day.

From above –

- 509 ανωθεν anohen an'-o-then
from 507; TDNT - 1:378,63; adv
KJV - from above 5, top 3, again 2, from the first 1, from the beginning 1, not tr 1; 13
1) from above, from a higher place
1a) of things which come from heaven or God
2) from the first, from the beginning, from the very first
3) anew, over again

Coming down –

- 2597 καταβαινω katabaino kat-ab-ah'-ee-no
from 2596 and the base of 939; TDNT - 1:522,90; v
KJV - come down 41, descend 18, go down 17, fall down 1, step down 1, get down 1, fall 1, vr come down 1; 81
1) to go down, come down, descend
1a) the place from which one has come down from
1b) to come down
1b1) as from the temple at Jerusalem, from the city of Jerusalem
1b2) of celestial beings coming down to earth
1c) to be cast down
2) of things
2a) to come (i.e. be sent) down
2b) to come (i.e. fall) down
2b1) from the upper regions of the air
3) metaph. to (go i.e.) be cast down to the lowest state of wretchedness and shame

This present participle indicates that "these good and perfect gifts flow forth to us in a continuing and constant stream." – Vaughan

Lights, heavenly lights –

- 5457 φως phos foce
from an obsolete φαω phao (to shine or make manifest, especially by rays, cf 5316, 5346); TDNT - 9:310,1293; n n
KJV - light 68, fire 2; 70
1) light
1a) the light
1a1) emitted by a lamp
1a2) a heavenly light such as surrounds angels when they appear on earth
1b) anything emitting light
1b1) a star
1b2) fire because it is light and sheds light
1b3) a lamp or torch
1c) light, i.e brightness
1c1) of a lamp
2) metaph.
2a) God is light because light has the extremely delicate, subtle, pure, brilliant quality
2b) of truth and its knowledge, together with the spiritual purity associated with it
2c) that which is exposed to the view of all, openly, publicly
2d) reason, mind
2d1) the power of understanding esp. moral and spiritual truth

For Synonyms see entry 5817

Synonyms

- See Definition for αυγη 827
See Definition for φεγγος 5338

See Definition for φως 5457

5457 - the general term for light: light of a fire

5338 - is a more concrete and emphatic term: the bright sunshine, the beam of light

827 - is a still stronger term, suggesting the fiery nature of light; used of shooting, heating rays

This phrase, "father of lights" is referring to God and His creation of the sun, moon, and stars in the sky. Thus "heavenly lights" is a good interpretive, though not literal translation.

"James, therefore, cites God's creation of the heavenly bodies as evidence of his power and continuing care for the world." – Moo

Variation –

There are at least six different readings of this phrase in the early manuscripts.

And it is a very obscure passage, as well.

3883 παραλλαγή parallage par-al-lag-ay'

from a compound of 3844 and 236; n f

KJV - variableness 1; 1

1) variation, change

Shifting –

5157 τροπή trope trop-ay'

from an apparently primary τρέπω trepo (to turn); n f

KJV - turning 1; 1

1) a turning

1a) of the heavenly bodies

Shadow –

Eighth imperative by verse 16!

644 αποσκίασμα aposkiasma ap-os-kee'-as-mah

from a compound of 575 and a derivative of 4639; TDNT - 7:399,1044; n n

KJV - shadow 1; 1

1) a shade cast by one object on another, a shadow

"Variation or shadow of turning"

God does not change. Even those things that we see as the most reliable (stars, heavens) change. But God does not.

"who is himself never subject to change or to eclipse." - TCNT

Philo – "Every created thing must necessarily undergo change, for this is its property, even as unchangeableness is the property of God."

"Indeed, the integrity and undividedness of God – in contrast to the duality and instability of man – is a key motif of the letter as a whole." – Moo

"The thrust of this (admittedly) obscure text is that James is offering a theodicy to vindicate the divine character in the face of those who doubted the goodness and reliability of God or who had given up hope in time of testing and imagined it was their 'fate.'" – Martin

Maybe even a hint here of debunking any possibility that his readers might be looking to the stars for their hope or direction.

Summary of verse 17 –

"Believers, ..., must not be led astray into thinking that God himself is tempting them to evil; on the contrary, he is the invariable giver of good gifts to his children." – Moo

In the exercise of His will, of His own will –

1014 βουλομαι boulomai boo'-lom-ah-ee

middle voice of a primary verb; TDNT - 1:629,108; v

KJV - will 15, would 11, be minded 2, intend 2, be disposed 1, be

willing 1, list 1, of his own will 1; 34

1) to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded

2) of willing as an affection, to desire

For Synonyms see entry 5915

To will, to Wish.

See definition for βουλομαι

1014

See definition for θελω

2309

In many cases these two words are used without appreciable distinction, meaning conscious willing, purpose. But frequently it is evident that a difference is intended, although there is much difference of opinion as to the exact distinction. Thayer says that βουλομαι "seems to designate the will which follows deliberation," θελω, "the will which proceeds from inclination." Grimm, on the other hand, says that yelw gives prominence to the emotive element, βουλομαι to the rational and volitive; θελω signifies the choice, while βουλομαι marks the choice as deliberate and intelligent. The view of Cremer on the whole seems preferable to any other. According to this view, βουλομαι has the wider range of meaning, but yelw is the stronger word; θελω denotes the active resolution, the will urging on to action, see Ro 7:15, while βουλομαι is rather to have in thought, to intend, to be determined. βουλομαι sometimes means no more than to have an inclination, see Ac 23:15. Instructive examples of the use of the two words in close proximity are found in Mr 15:9,15, and especially Mt 1:19.

"He willed"

"Emphasizes how God acted freely without external constraint in the creation of the universe and of humankind." – Martin

Referring back to verse 13, God doesn't will for people to sin, He wills for them to be redeemed!

Brought us forth, begat –

616 ἀποκτεω apokueo ap-ok-oo-eh'-o
from 575 and the base of 2949;; v
KJV - bring forth 1, begat 1; 2

- 1) to bring forth
 - 1a) from the womb
 - 1b) give birth to
- 2) produce

Word –

3056 λογος logos log'-os
from 3004; TDNT - 4:69,505; n m
KJV - word 218, saying 50, account 8, speech 8, Word (Christ) 7, thing 5, not tr 2, misc 32; 330

- 1) of speech
 - 1a) a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea
 - 1b) what someone has said
 - 1b1) a word
 - 1b2) the sayings of God
 - 1b3) decree, mandate or order
 - 1b4) of the moral precepts given by God
 - 1b5) Old Testament prophecy given by the prophets
 - 1b6) what is declared, a thought, declaration, aphorism, a weighty saying, a dictum, a maxim
 - 1c) discourse
 - 1c1) the act of speaking, speech
 - 1c2) the faculty of speech, skill and practice in speaking
 - 1c3) a kind or style of speaking
 - 1c4) a continuous speaking discourse - instruction
 - 1d) doctrine, teaching
 - 1e) anything reported in speech; a narration, narrative
 - 1f) matter under discussion, thing spoken of, affair, a matter in dispute, case, suit at law
 - 1g) the thing spoken of or talked about; event, deed
- 2) its use as respect to the MIND alone
 - 2a) reason, the mental faculty of thinking, meditating, reasoning, calculating
 - 2b) account, i.e. regard, consideration
 - 2c) account, i.e. reckoning, score
 - 2d) account, i.e. answer or explanation in reference to judgment
 - 2e) relation, i.e. with whom as judge we stand in relation
 - 2e1) reason would
 - 2f) reason, cause, ground
- 3) In John, denotes the essential Word of God, Jesus Christ, the personal wisdom and power in union with God, his minister in creation and government of the universe, the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical, which for the procurement of man's salvation put on human nature in the person of Jesus the Messiah, the second person in the Godhead, and shone forth conspicuously from His words and deeds.

This is the same word that is in John 1:1.

Truth –

225 αληθεια aletheia al-ay'-thi-a
from 227; TDNT - 1:232,37; n f
KJV - truth 107, truly + 1909 1, true 1, verity 1; 110

- 1) objectively
 - 1a) what is true in any matter under consideration
 - 1a1) truly, in truth, according to truth
 - 1a2) of a truth, in reality, in fact, certainly
 - 1b) what is true in things appertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth
 - 1b1) in the greatest latitude
 - 1b2) the true notions of God which are open to human reason without his supernatural intervention
 - 1c) the truth as taught in the Christian religion, respecting God and the execution of his purposes through Christ, and respecting the duties of man, opposing alike to the superstitions of the Gentiles and the inventions of the Jews, and the corrupt opinions and precepts of false teachers even among Christians
- 2) subjectively
 - 2a) truth as a personal excellence
 - 2a1) that candour of mind which is free from affection, pretence, simulation, falsehood, deceit

This is referring to the Gospel.

First fruits –

536 ἀπαρχη aparche ap-ar-khay'
from a compound of 575 and 756; TDNT - 1:484,81; n f
KJV - firstfruits 8; 8

- 1) to offer firstlings or firstfruits
- 2) to take away the firstfruits of the productions of the earth which was offered to God. The first portion of the dough, from which sacred loaves were to be prepared. Hence term used of persons consecrated to God for all time.
- 3) persons superior in excellence to others of the same class

Remember how Jesus brought back to life hundreds for the feast of first fruits?

Creatures –

2938 κτισμα ktisma ktis'-mah
from 2936; TDNT - 3:1000,481; n n
KJV - creature 4; 4

- 1) thing founded
- 2) created thing

Summary of verse 18 –

“James, therefore, appeals to the ‘new birth’ of Christians as a striking example of God’s good and faithful giving. ... God’s grace has been extended through the gospel to people so as to bring into existence a foretaste, or down payment, of a redemptive plan that will eventually encompass all of creation.” – Moo

Conclusion

“James is being challenged to offer a theodicy against a powerful belief that, in the name of astral religion and occult mysteries, looked to the stars as arbiters of human destiny.” ... “That theodicy offers the assurance that life is not at the mercy of cosmic forces or subject to a meaningless round of random events.” – Martin