

Finer Grounds

James & Jude

Lesson 3: James 1:13-27

Read James 1:13-15

While the first half of chapter one in the book of James deals with Christians attitudes while under trial, the wisdom they are to seek, and the crown that awaits those who have withstood the test, the second half of chapter one develops into a comparison of "test" against "trial". While the same Greek word is used for both ideas, the context can help us understand the difference. The trails referred to are persecutions, which test genuineness, while the temptations are a petition to sin.

Since God cannot be tempted (vs. 13), it goes against his nature and would be foolish to assume that God is capable of tempting others himself. Job is a great example of this concept. Satan was soliciting Job to sin, while the Lord was testing his faith. Trials come from the outside, while temptations come from within. Each man falls into entrapment of sin when he is enticed by his own wants and desires.

Satan can only draw out (the literal meaning of enticed) with "lures" what is already inside of us! Lures are set to trap, but just like the animal that becomes ensnared, we would not become entrapped if we weren't intrigued by what is set in that ploy. It would not be a temptation if we didn't already have the passion toward it. What a sobering thought!

We see this disastrous cycle in verse 15 when that desire is measured in physical terms. The craving is conceived in the heart, and there is intent behind it. The birth of sin is the action

itself, and the growth of that born sin is a refusal to turn away from that sin. In other words, it is a lack of repentance. The result of that decision is death, a spiritual separation from God. This is in stark contrast to the one who uses wisdom and overcomes, resulting in spiritual life (vs. 13).

Read James 1:16-18

Here James is commanding them to not be deceived, but to understand that since God does not bring forth temptation (vs. 13), He brings forth the opposite---good and perfect (complete) gifts from above. He is trying to get the readers to see that God is not to be blamed for their problem with their own lusts.

An astronomy term is used to show that these gifts come from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow, to emphasize that there is NO change in God. He continues to give good gifts!

Do you believe that the gift in verse 16 & 17 can be referring to wisdom? (look back at verse 5)

In verse 18, we are told that God brought us forth by the Word of his own will - he was not obligated! This terminology also connects back to verse 15, except this time it brings forth something that leads to eternal life for us, His "firstfruits".

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In-depth point: Firstfruits of the Old Testament were the first portion of produce that belonged to the Lord and was offered to Him before the rest could be used. It conveys the notion of what is choice. As Christians we are the firstfruits.

What do you think this point has to do with the greater context?

Read James 1:19-27

The Word of truth flows into this set of scriptures, where three directions are given as to how one should respond to the Word. We are to have an attitude that makes us quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. This is not to be taken as typical advice for Christians to speak less and to subdue their anger, but instructions concerning the Word. The term "therefore" at the beginning of verse 21 tells us what should be the desired result: A Christian stripping off the filth flooding his surroundings, and being quick to hear (vs. 19) and receive the Word, which has the power to save their souls!

In-depth point: We are to receive the word with meekness. The meekness here describes a wild horse brought under control by a rein. It does not show a sign of weakness.

In-depth point: The Word we are to receive is implanted, which means it is to be buried below the surface, deep down in our hearts.

If the Word has truly implanted into the depths of our heart, it will mean more to us than shallow words. The Word will then be heard and acted upon, in contrast to simply being heard with no actions to follow. This is a deception, which will only cause further problems! James must be concerned about the threat of defrauding because this is the second time in the first chapter that he brings it up (James 1:16)! The one who proceeds with action, instead of the one who lets it "go in one ear and out the other" and perseveres in perfecting his character, will be the one who is blessed (James 1:25).

In dealing with the man who is focused on an external ritual of worship, he is centered on being "showy". However, this is another deception if his tongue is not controlled as it nullifies his worship! He is acting like the Pharisees we read about in the book of Matthew. The right spirit of religion will give one the correct perspective and thus actions will follow (see James 1:22), such as explained at the end of chapter one in the mentioning of the aid of orphans and widows. It's about what happens in the site of God, and is more than just a "ceremony"!

What are some other examples of actions that display a right spirit of religion?

New Testament Commentary by Wayne Jackson, 2011

The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text by Peter H. Davids, 1982

Workshop in the Word, Preaching Through James by Orbison/Petrillo, 2000

World Video Bible School: James, 1986