

James 1:13-17 'Sin: its Root And its Five Stages'

Friends, last time in James we looked at v9-12 of chapter one. 'The Poor Believer, The Rich Believer and Persevering', I called it. We saw in those words that it is the third time in just 12 verses, that James encourages his scattered, persecuted brethren to rejoice in the midst of their current trials. Verse 1: "Greetings" "*Xairein*" "Rejoice." Verse 2 "Consider it (*or be governed by*) pure joy when you fall into all kinds of trials." And V9, "take pride in (*Xaukasthow*) glory in, boast in, rejoice in", for the poor believer it was their "high position." I explained that when looking at this statement with non-Christian eyes, it makes no sense. And particularly so since the term "humble circumstances" "*tapeinos*" means *one who does not rise far above the ground*. Perhaps above the bread line, says Blanchard. So how can someone who does not rise far above the ground "rejoice in their high position?" It makes no sense, until we shine the light of Christ's gospel down upon this statement, and then it does make sense. It means that exalted place, which they now have in, and because of Jesus! 1 Corinthians 7:21 "Even the former slave is now the Lord's freed man."

V10-11 "But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position." Again, until Christ's gospel is shone upon this statement, it also makes no sense. How does a wealthy believer "take pride in his low position?" Well, it's by having been brought to the Cross! He now realises that all of his worldly riches, perhaps even the empire that he has built: The admiration that he has received from others, the grand house and the bulging bank accounts, mean nothing to God. Indeed all of those things are folly, even empty and meaningless, if a person doesn't recognise that all things come from God, and ought to be used for His glory. So having been given that born again perspective upon his wealth, he no longer sees himself as high and exalted in his own eyes. No he clings to the Cross, submits to Jesus, and needs to be wary of those things becoming a snare to him!

V12 "blessed is the man who perseveres under trial." Both the poor and the rich Christian will face trials. They may be different, but face them they will. The poor for their daily needs, the rich from being ensnared by their wealth. But for those who "persevere the crown of life" awaits. Yes "*hupomoneis*" means *To remain while others depart*. Not turning to the right or to the left from the narrow road because we desire the comforts and ease of this world, no. Only "remaining" will find us in glory with the King, wearing the "Crown of life." Yes the Crown awaits but first there must be the Cross. For without the Cross there will be no Crown!

And so we pick up the text in James 1:13-17 'Sin: It's Root And It's Five Stages!' Now brothers and sisters, the claim has been made that since God created man the way he is, with the ability to sin; and since He also created Satan the "father of lies" (the father of falsehood and deception), then it stands to reason that surely the root of sin lies in God Himself!

But as James has been speaking about "rejoicing" in the midst of trials and difficulties, not that we leap for joy when our world seems to be falling apart, and we look forward to the next load of trouble, but rather that we take comfort, yes we "Consider" V2, we are governed by, God's former deliverances and mercies to us. And we take comfort, knowing that those trials have a purpose. They are "bringing us to a maturity in Christ so that we lack nothing" V4. And yet now James deals with the sad reality, of what we will often find ourselves doing: blaming God for the part that we play, in our own troubles, when it is often actually our own sin that has brought us into the trials in which we find ourselves!

Just as it was with Adam in the garden of Eden. When Eve is first brought to him by God his words are "At last this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." *Yes, she is the one that has been missing from my life. Lord she is the one that I've been looking for. She completes me!* Yet when he so miserably failed his duties of authority and headship as a husband before God, causing both himself and Eve to fall into sin, his response is different. When God comes looking for him asking, "Adam where are you?" He replies, "I hid because I was naked." Then God asks "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" So Adam says, "The woman you put here with me cause me to sin." So she is no longer "bone of my bones," the most wonderful of blessings from God, but now she the one who had ensnared him with her wiles. And since it was God who had given her to him, it was of course all God's fault!

Friends, we are indeed our parents children. So unless you are perfect, (and I'm sorry to say that I'm sure you are not, because there was only One, and will only ever be One perfect person) so I have no doubt that like me, you have most likely found yourself in this very place, at some time in your life! But Beloved what we need constantly to remember, which you have heard me say many times is that what Satan intends for evil, God has predetermined for good!

Friends, I have explained before that the Greek word for temptation "*peirasmos*", can equally be translated to mean either "test or tempt." And may I suggest that in every difficult situation, (and indeed in many ways every situation in which we find ourselves in life) can be both "test" and a "temptation."

Let us again return to the garden and the origin of sin, which gives us the template for all sin. God had placed a particular tree in the middle of the garden. (It was not an apple tree; that's Hollywood stuff: we don't know what kind of tree it was). This tree was placed in the middle of the garden among all the other trees, as a simple test of obedience. Yes, the test was clear and simple: '*Consider My abundance for you*' God could have said. '*I have provided you with all that you need and could ever need.*' Yes '*all of the garden is before you.*' '*I have formed you from the dust of the earth, I have breathed the very breath of life into your bodies so that you have become living beings, you both know this to be true.*' '*All that I speak you know to be true.*' Again, He may have said, '*all that you see is yours, except for one tree. It is your test of obedience. Eat from this tree and everything will change forever.*'

But what God said was, "For on the day that you eat from the fruit of that tree, you will surely die." Yes, that tree was God's "test" of obedience, but then Satan comes and lays the trap of "temptation" before them! And friends, "that very day" they did die. No not physically, and yet in a far greater sense: the spiritual sense of the word. Their relationship with God was broken, and would never be the same again. That is, unless God did something extraordinary! They were cast out of the garden, but before they were, Genesis 3:15, God made the promise of His Son. Speaking to Satan of Jesus. "He will crush your head and you will bruise his heel." Friends that's what happened at the Cross. The defeat of Satan, sin and death, while at the same time, winning the victories of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. Yes that's what Jesus did at the Cross: paid the price for our sin and restored our relationship with God!

So Brethren now that we have looked at the root and nature of sin, and seen that all situations can be both a "test" and a "temptation," let us now take a look at V13 "When tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me." Now as I have just mentioned, God had not put the tree in the garden to "tempt" Adam and Eve, and then stand back almost gleefully waiting for them to fail, no. It was a simple "test" of obedience. And in the hands of Satan and the willing compliant hearts of the man and the woman, that same "test" became a snare and a temptation" to them. But that was not

God's intention. It was a "test" of obedience. Why were the Ten Commandments given? To "test" the faithfulness and obedience of God's people. Yes they defined what sin was, but they also revealed the Holiness of God's Character. Again, V13 "When tempted, now one should say God is tempting me," because it is not a temptation from God, it is a "test!"

Look at the way he qualifies the statement: "For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." So let's break this down. What is James actually saying here? Since "temptation" has its root in evil desires within the hearts of men, women and children, and it is fanned by the whispers of the Evil One, let us never think that "God, can be tempted, nor does he tempt anyone." And why? Since temptation is rooted in evil, and actually needs evil to exist, it cannot be attributed to God, because in God, there is no such thing as evil, "temptation or darkness." Only "light." 1 John 1:5: "This is the message that we have heard from him and declared to you. God is light, in him there is no darkness at all." No, there is only "Truth and Light" in God John tells us.

James continues to put us straight, saying, *'Get that notion of blaming God for your sin out of your mind, because V14 " but each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed.'* Now the word for desires which we have before us here, is "*epithumius*," and it translates as "lusts." And the NIV has put it really well, where it says that "he is dragged away and enticed." Because that is the image which is conveyed. It's the picture of someone who is being "dragged out" against their will. They want to remain where they are, but the pull on them is too great. There are forces working against them to lay a hold of them, and drag them out.

And the word for "enticed" "*deleadsomenos*" and it means *to catch with a bait, to "lure" the fish, or the prey in!* So, although such things be a "test" from God, that "test" turns into a "temptation," when a person's own lusts, (whatever they may be) "drag" the believer away from God, just as they did with Adam and Eve. It "drags them away," from knowing what is right and knowing what is true. As Satan dangles the bait of that sin, which he knows, is our weakness! 1 Peter 5:8 "Beware your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour" Beloved, it is a game to the Evil One. A deadly game with eternal consequences. Even a conflict, a war, that he is raging against all of those that have come to Jesus in faith and hope!

Revelation 12:12b,c "But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you. He is filled with fury because he knows his time is short." The picture which we have here, is like one of those murderous evil regimes, that have been defeated. And as the liberators move into the towns and the cities, that fleeing evil army, lays waste to everything and everyone that they can. Yes that is the picture. Jesus has won the victory at the Cross, so the Evil One knows that his days are numbered, yes he "knows that his time is short." In some places this is a physical battle. Yes a physical war being waged against the Saints, by the powers that be in the hands of Satan. But in other places, the devil's ways are far more insidious and devious, as they are in Australia. As he raises up anti-Christian ways and anti-Christ leaders! Who even claim Jesus but in reality are perverter's of the truth. And he also wars against us with our own "desires," those "lusts" of our hearts, using even the members of our own bodies against us. Our eyes, our mouths, our ears, our minds, and the flesh of our old ways!

Beloved, this is why worship is so important. Hebrews 10:23-25 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope that we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching." Worship. The study of the scriptures. Fellowship and prayer. These are the weapons which we must

use against the Evil One and his legions. Satan is ever on the prowl, casting out his baits and lures seeking to drag us away from God, using those hidden “desires” of the flesh against us!

Now brothers and sisters, I want you to notice that James points out and explains the five stages of sin. Firstly, there is the “temptation.” Then there is those desires of the flesh. Next, there is the giving into those things, which result in the conception of the sin. Even symbolically, in the same way through the planting of the seed, that a child is conceived. Then next comes the sin’s birth, being the act, itself. And then finally, the ultimate consequences of that birth! Romans 6:23 Paul writes, “For the wages of sin is death.” Can you see that everything that we do in these lives that we lead, by God, are viewed as labours. And for all of those labours, there is a “wage” that we are working toward. And if we do not labour in and for Jesus, that “wage is death.” And it is not merely physical death. But eternal separation from God, in hell!

Dear friends, from those first two steps, the believer can flee. Now brothers and sisters, clearly, this is not simply speaking specifically of sexual sin here, although certainly, that is part of the body of sin as a whole. But of sexual sin, the scriptures do tell us to get to “*thugete*” “flee fornication.” It means *to take flight. Get out of there, do not linger. Move those thoughts on*, as Gary says. Because in them, there is tremendous danger. In James 4:7 he goes on to say, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” But when it comes to sexual sin, and also idolatry, it doesn't even say “resist,” it just says run. Because so great is the danger to the Christian!

Beloved, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” Notice the word “seized” brothers and sisters. “Temptation” “seizes” us. As I said before, it seeks to “drag us out.” But yes we can “resist.” God will enable us. Those first two stages, we can have power over. But once we've allowed that seed to be sown, (similarly as with the conception of a child) a woman cannot become unpregnant, as it were, by then it is too late to leave the situation. Help has got to come from somewhere else. Yes we should have gotten out of there, we should have “fled,” before it was too late.

Brethren, if we think we can entertain the devil. If we think we can go into certain places, or do certain things or allow ourselves to have certain thoughts, all of which are opposed to God, indeed He warns us against in His Word, and even commands us concerning such things. But still believe we can remain unscathed, think again. Because eventually, we will fall under Satan’s spell. Yes if we linger long enough, we will all take the bait! For all sexual sin and the sin of idolatry, the Bible says “flee.” *Thugete.*” Yes run! But for everything else we are told “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7.

Brothers and sisters, James has been Speaking of that foul deception, of thinking and believing and acting in certain ways, as though “temptation” and evil could have their origin in and stem from God. And now he says in V16: “don't be deceived my dear brothers”. V17: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, having come down from the father of the heavenly lights.”

Yes, it is all a foul stench. It is all a deception James says. The root of evil does not lie in God, but within the fallen heart of man, as he is lured and dragged out by Satan’s whispers. Indeed on the contrary, V17 “Every good and perfect gift is from above.” What did Jesus say? In Matthew 7:11 “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?” *If men and women can provide for their children though we are rooted in sin. How much more will our heavenly Father provide for those He*

loves, so much so that He would even give His One and Only Son for them! We saw earlier in the chapter that God “gives generously.” But He gives only that which He knows we need. That which is beneficial to us. And it may well be hardship and trial. Even great loss. Because God's plan for us, is not simply about the here and now, no. He is working toward our eternal future! So no, evil doesn't dwell in or proceed from God. In fact, v17 “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”

It's a wonderful title for God isn't it. “The Father of the heavenly lights.” Yes only “good” proceeds from God to His people. And His gifts are not only “good,” they are “perfect,” meaning that “God's gifts” cannot be improved upon. When He gives, His gifts achieve exactly what they were intended to achieve. And of course God's ultimate perfect gift was the gift of His Son Jesus! There was nothing lacking in the death of Jesus. Unlike the Romanists who say that penance, and indulgences and other things must be added to Christ's Grace, we know this not to be true. “It is finished” Jesus said. Yes it was perfectly completed. Nothing can be, or needs to be added to the Cross of Christ!

Now the NIV translation has actually added the word “heavenly” here. It does not appear in the Greek. But they've done so with good reason I believe. This term “coming down from the Father of lights,” conveys the idea, that God is the source of all “light” that exists in the entire universe! At the dawn of creation, when “the earth was formless and void and darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” Genesis 1:1-2, God spoke the first of His creations into being. Genesis 1:3-4 “And God said, “Let there be light”. And there was light, and God saw that the light was good.” V10 “And God saw that it was good.” V12 “And God saw that it was good.” V14-18 “And God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth. And it was so. God made two great lights the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.” V21 “And God saw that it was good.” V25 “And God saw that it was good.” And finally V31 “And God saw all that he had made and behold, it was very good.”

Yes God's gifts are always “good.” And He has given humanity “light.” Psalm 104:2: “He wraps himself in light as with a garment.” Psalm 4:6: “Let the light of your face shine upon us.” Psalm 27:1: “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” Psalm 89:15: “Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence O Lord.” Psalm 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Yes, God is the source of all “light.” The sun and the moon and the stars, the planets and the galaxies. He is the source of all intellectual “light.” He has given man the mind and intellect to reason and understand things. He is the source of all industrial “light” and creative “light.” He has given humanity the ability to build and create. He is the source of all theological “light” as He has given us His Spirit to know and understand God. He is the source of all spiritual and redemptive “light.”

Yes, 1 John 1-5 “This is the message that we heard from him and declared to you. God is light, in him there is no darkness at all.” And John 1:4-5 “In him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it.” And finally John 3:19-21 “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

So how do we tie these things together this morning? Well quite simply really: The root of sin does not stem from God, but from the lust of the heart within humanity. Mark 7:21-22 "For from within, out of men's hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean." No, there no evil in God. So He neither tempts with evil, or can be tempted by evil desires. No it is the "desires" of the hearts of men, move by the whispers of Satan. So we must "resist the devil and he will flee from us."

All of God's gifts are good to those whom He loves. Because He is the Father of all light and He has given us all of the light of the universe! And finally, we must be aware of, and beware of, those five stages of sin. Temptation. Lust or "desires." Giving in to that "lust" leading to sin's conception. The "birth," or the act itself of sin. And then when sin is fully grown, death! "For the wages of sin is death." But the "perfect gift" of God, (His son Jesus Christ) is eternal life.

Amen! Let's pray!