

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning we are continuing our study through the epistle of James.

Let's pray...

[Jas 1:9-18 NKJV] 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, 10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. 12 Blessed [is] the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own

will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

One of my favorite musicals of all time is Fiddler on the Roof,

And if you have never seen it, it is about a poor Jewish family – living in Imperial Russia.

And much of the story involves around Tevye – the father, who is caught in a battle of trying to keep the influences of the world from encroaching upon the Jewish traditions of the family.

And many times throughout the play, we see Tevye speaking to God because he doesn't seem to understand the trials that are occurring around him.

He is a poor milk delivery man stuck pulling his own cart because his horse is hurt.

And he proceeds to have the following conversation with God.

"It may sound like I'm complaining, but I'm not.

After all, with Your help, I'm starving to death. Oh, dear Lord.

You made many many poor people.

I realize, of course, it's no shame to be poor... but it's no great honor either.

So what would be so terrible... if I had a small fortune?"

And he then proceeds to sing the song, “If I were a rich man” and in the song, he proceeds to tell God what he would do with the riches – if God would simply give them to him.

You see, Tevye had the misconception that being rich was going to solve all of his problems.

That was the mindset of some in the early church and continues to be the mindset of many in the church today.

So, James being inspired by the Holy Spirit – addresses it here in our text.

[Jas 1:9 NKJV] 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,

The word that is used here for lowly can be in reference to both one’s financial status as well as social status.

One of the things that we have to remind ourselves that during this time period, there was no middle class.

You were either rich or you were poor.

And because of the persecution that existed in the early church – many of them found themselves falling into the category of a lowly brother or sister.

The question we have to ask ourselves is, “Why is James bringing this up right now?”

Because for the first eight verses, he has told us to count it all joy when we fall into various trials, he has told us to ask for wisdom from God so that we may learn from our trials – James has even told us how to ask for wisdom.

Why is he addressing the rich and the poor?

You see, when we are in trials, it is tempting to look around at others and to compare our trials with theirs.

We are tempted to believe that some people don't have any trials, that their lives are so easy.

This is especially true when dealing with rich and poor.

We have the incorrect mindset that because we are poor or insignificant, that God has chosen to abandon us or has forgotten us.

But James says that those living in humble or lowly circumstances should not focus on our bank accounts or our social status, but that our focus should be on our truly exalted position in Christ.

In other words, don't worry if you don't have a lot of riches! Be proud of who you are in Jesus Christ.

As believers,

We are "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6),

"forgiven for Christ's sake" (Ephesians 4:32),

"justified by His grace" (Titus 3:7), and

"kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5).

Turn with me to Ephesians 1,

[Eph 1:3 NKJV] 3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ,

Note that Paul doesn't say who has blessed us with every physical blessing – here on earth.

That doctrine is false.

He says every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

What kind of blessings? Every spiritual blessing.

These blessing are far better than material blessings as material blessing are only temporary.

One day, the one who lacks so much now will be brought up, exalted, to a place of completion and fullness.

The lowly brother then looks forward to the future, he does not boast in the present, but in what God is going to do.

[Jas 1:10-11 NKJV] 10 but the **rich in his humiliation,** because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. **So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.**

Now, James directs his attention to those believers that are rich.

And he brings a warning to them.

To the poor, James said that they should glory in their exaltation – to the rich, he says that they should glory in their humiliation.

You see, the rich man is tempted to glory in his wealth and the status and power that come from financial success.

James tells him to glory, rather, in his humiliation as a believer. It's being brought low and humbling ourselves by coming before the cross of Jesus and saying, "I am nothing! Jesus is everything!"

The rich believer must understand that wealth does not put him on a higher spiritual rung than the poor believer.

He must understand that wealth pertains only to this momentary life.

He is not going to be able to take it with him/her.

He and his money will soon fade away.

And James provides us with the illustration of the flowers and the grass that wither with the hot sun.

We see this down here in Southern Arizona – if we are blessed with a wet winter or wet monsoon, we see the wildflowers grow along the highway and the hillsides – but as soon as the hot dry air comes back – they wilt.

They are short lived – much like the physical riches of an individual.

Let's look at how Paul addresses this – 1 Timothy 6,

[1Ti 6:17-19 NKJV] 17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 [Let them] do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Paul, says the same thing concerning the rich believers.

He warns them against placing their trust in their money.

Being rich is not a sin – Abraham was rich, Isaac and Jacob were rich – it is only when money becomes the ultimate goal – that is when sin enters in.

So the message that James provides the rich and the poor is the same.

Whether we are rich or poor, we all have the same responsibility: To keep our priorities straight; To commit our work to the Lord; To avoid wasting our lives on things that won't last into eternity; To be good and faithful stewards.

[Jas 1:12 NKJV] 12 Blessed [is] the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

There is a big difference between trials and temptations.

Trials are allowed by God.

Trials are allowed by God to build us and to mature us.

Temptations on the other hand – it is a tool of Satan.

It is a solicitation to evil – to separate us from God.

Temptation alone is not a sin – Luke chapter 4 tells us that Satan tempted Jesus for forty days –

it is the response to the temptation that determines whether we sin or not.

And what James is telling us here in verse 12 is that we are not to give into the temptation. That we are to continue to persevere and not give in.

Turn with me to 1 Cor 10,

Let's see what Paul has to say regarding temptation.

[1Co 10:13 NKJV] 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God [is] faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear [it].

We often want to excuse our particular tempting circumstances as “very unique” and a “special exception,” but God reminds us that our temptation is not unique.

Many other men and women of God have faced the same or similar temptation, and have found the strength in God to overcome the temptation.

I asked you to underline bear it – because even though we have a way of escape to overcome the temptation – we still have to bear it. It simply does not go away.

And this is the same thing that James is telling us in his epistle as he tells us to endure temptation.

And for those who have endured and been approved, they will be awarded with the crown of life.

This crown of life can very well be a physical crown or it could be in reference to eternal life alongside of the Lord.

Now, this doesn't mean that we are somehow disqualified if we fall down.

The point is that we must stay in the battle and endure.

We simply get back up.

[Jas 1:13 NKJV] 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

Regarding trials, we are told to count it all joy because God in His sovereignty will test the faith of His people and He will do it for our good.

There are many places in scripture where we find this. Romans 8:28, Hebrews 12:5-6

However, James warns us not to assume that God tempts us in order for us to turn from Him.

We must understand that every trial brings temptation with it.

When we face financial difficulty, we are tempted to distrust God's provision.

When someone dear to us dies, we are tempted to question God's love.

When we experience unjust suffering, we are tempted to question God's justice.

But know this: God may test us, but according to verse 13, He does not and cannot and will not tempt us. We are responsible in temptations.

When Adam ate the forbidden fruit and found himself having to explain his actions to God...

(Genesis 3:12 NKJV) Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

It sounds as if Adam might be blaming God for giving him the woman in the first place...

Sometimes we can fall into the subtle trap of thinking that God must have something to do with the temptation we're experiencing.

We might think that He's the one that put it there.

We might think that if He doesn't want me to give in to the temptation,

He can take it away ... and when He doesn't take it away we just give in.

That's wrong.

Let's make one thing clear. There is no person in the universe farther from the concept of sin than God.

James says clearly in verse 13 that God is perfectly sinless.

Everything in Him resists sin; evil is inherently foreign to Him.

He is aware of it, but He is untainted by it. In no way can God be blamed for temptation and sin.

Who is responsible then?

You and me.

[Jas 1:14 NKJV] 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Here in verse 14, James provides two different illustrations to prove his point.

I asked you to make a note of the phrase “drawn away” and “enticed”.

Drawn away carries with the idea of baiting a trap – if you ever watch those old western movies – the fur trappers would put bait in their traps in order to attract the animal they wanted to capture.

The word enticed in the original Greek means to bait a hook.

No animal is deliberately going to step into an empty trap and no fish is knowingly going to bite at a naked hook.

The idea is to hide the trap and hide the hook.

That is the way temptation works.

There is always some bait that appeals to our natural desires.

The same bait that attracts us also hides the fact that yielding to the desire will eventually bring sorrow and punishment.

For example, we look at the life of David – when he committed adultery with Bathsheba.

I am pretty sure that he would not have committed adultery if he would have seen the tragic consequences – the death of a baby, the murder of Uriah.

But the bait keeps us from seeing the consequences of sin.

Temptation appeals to our desires, attracts us, but hides the fact that it will kill us.

This kind of desire drives men to pornography, women into another man's arms, employees to dishonesty, and people to a number of other sins.

Sin starts with disordered thought, which leads to disordered desire, and we begin to want that which will destroy us.

What can we do when we meet temptation???

We can run from it or we can face it.

Joseph ran away from it when Potipher's wife. David could have ran away as well – but he did the opposite. He called for Bathsheba to be brought to him.

Jesus faced temptation.

And he countered temptation using God's word.

Three times, He said, It is written - when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

You see, when we know the word of God, we can detect the bait and deal with it decisively.

[Jas 1:15 NKJV] 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

A small indulgence can become so dominating that it ruins your life, and the lives of those you love.

That is what sin does.

This is what James reminds us of here in verse 15.

That the small desire that was spoken about in verse 14, can be drawn away through deception – and once acted upon lead to disobedience and ultimately death.

That is the anatomy of sin

Desire

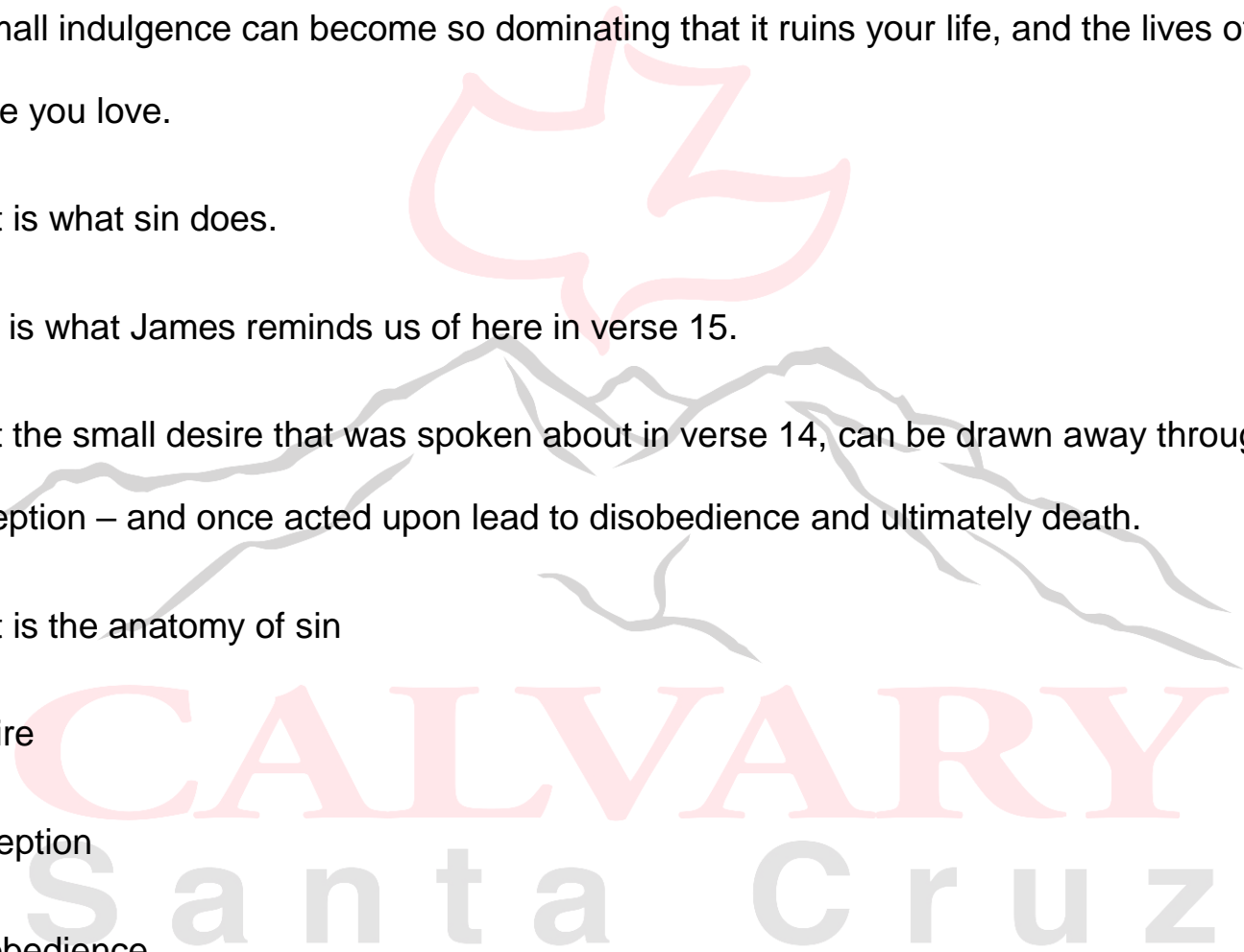
Deception

Disobedience

Death

It "brings forth death." That can't be good.

We need reminding that sin kills things.



In the Garden of Eden, Satan told Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would be a good thing, to bring her and Adam into a greater knowledge of life.

She thought her quality of life would improve.

Did eating the forbidden fruit improve Eve's quality of life?

Of course not -

Quite the opposite.

It brought death. Adam and Eve died spiritually, they began to die physically - and ultimately they did die.

Church, we must recognize that the root of the problem is not that thing we are so often tempted with.

The root of the problem is us.

Turn to Romans 7,

[Rom 7:17-20 NKJV] 17 But now, [it is] no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but [how] to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will [to do], I do not do; but the evil I will not [to do], that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not [to do], it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

So, what happens if we blow it and fall – we give into temptation? What then?

We get back up.

We don't run away from Him – we run toward Him and admit what we've done.

[1John 1:9 NKJV] 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[Jas 1:16-17 NKJV] 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

One of the enemy's tricks is to convince us that our Father is holding out on us, that He does not really love us and care for us.

When Satan approached Eve, he suggested that if God really loved her, He would permit her to eat of the forbidden tree.

When Satan tempted Jesus, he raised the question of hunger: "If Your Father loves You, why are You hungry?"

The goodness of God is a great barrier against yielding to temptation.

We simply need to remember His goodness toward us during these times of trials and temptation.

Since God is good and unchanging, we do not need any other person (including Satan) to meet any of our needs.

We need to remember that it is better to be hungry in the will of God than to be full outside the will of God.

[Jas 1:18 NKJV] 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Here in verse 18, James is reminding us who we are.

As believer's we are His firstfruits.

The picture of firstfruits carries the idea of a preview of that which is to come.

What God has done in our lives to change our hearts by His goodness is only a preview of the day to come when He will make all things new in all creation.

And the work He has done in our new birth will one day lead to a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more trials and no more temptations.

In the meantime, we are to take heart.

He has saved us from our sin. And if He has saved us from our sin, then we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that He will see us through our sorrow.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

