

Superfluity of Naughtiness (James 1:18-22)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (7/20/2014)

Introduction

1. We are tracing the main theme of James—suffering due to trials that suddenly fall upon us (v. 2).
 - a. We are to count it “all joy” because we know that the result of the trial is the “perfect man” God is working on us to be (vv. 2-4).
 - b. The process, however, requires the application of wisdom, which God freely gives to those who ask Him in faith (vv. 5-8).
 - c. Double-mindedness presents a formidable obstacle to steadfast endurance (vv. 9, 10).
 - d. Steadfastness under trial is a clear mark of new life in Christ for those who love Him (contra death due to self-sufficiency—v. 12). So,—
 - e. Beware of thinking that God is operating as “first cause” in trials, thus responding in a sinful way to the trials (vv. 13-16).
 - f. A right response requires knowing who God *is* and *how* He operates from immutable goodness (v. 17).
 - g. God’s goodness is evidenced by His will, “birthing” believers through the Word of truth for special standing as “firstfruits” of His creation.
2. The key to responding to trials and to resisting temptation is found in one’s *reaction* to God’s Word. We are to *rest* in His word by (1) *receiving* it or *accepting* it; (2) *responding* to it or *acting* on it; (3) *resigning* to it or *abiding* by it.
3. This morning we will look at the first step in resting in God’s Word—receiving it.

I. The Process of Debate

Verse 21 describes the language of *argument*—of one in debate with another.

1. In this case, the believer is to “take note” as to how he proceeds with his argument.
2. Argument is a form of *prayer* in that it lays out a desired expectation and forms reasons why such an argument is *right* (righteous; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8).

II. Three Injunctions

Guiding the process of argument are three injunctions (actually *one* action):

1. Be quick to *listen*—in contrast to quick and violent disputation. Hear the argument out before you respond. At the same time—
2. Be careful in *answering*—carefully weigh your words *before* you speak, not *as* you speak.
3. Watch for *anger* both on your part and in the other’s response. James drops the participle here, which argues that in answering carefully one heads off an angry response before it is made.

III. Avoid Anger

The importance of avoiding anger (v. 21).

1. The anger of man does not “work out” (see v. 3) the righteousness of God (Acts 10:35 vs. James 2:9).
2. There is a righteous indignation, but *orge* as opposed to *thumos* speaks to a settled indignation, an inward hostile disposition.
3. In other words, no one promotes the cause of Christ by exercising his own personal anger, which reveals his own settled hostility.

IV. Prepare to Receive

1. We are to prepare to receive the Word by *putting off* certain things (a metaphor of removing clothing (Eph. 4:22, 25; Col. 3:8; 1 Pet. 2:1).
 - a. *Filthiness* (literally a dirty garment)—vile as opposed to pure—what is unholy in outward appearance
 - b. Superfluity of naughtiness—*abundant* (overflowing) *evil*—an inward disposition to sin and cause harm through sinning. This describes one who provokes a fight with the intention of causing harm (evil) to others living in peace.
2. Instead, we are to exhibit *meekness* (a docile spirit) as opposed to an angry disposition.
3. In the spirit of meekness, then, we are to *receive* or *take hold of* (as opposed to the previous *putting off*) what has already been implanted in us by His Spirit.
4. The reason given for this action is that the Word implanted is doing its saving work in our souls.

Summary

The key both to our response to trials and to resisting temptation is in our reaction to the “Word of Truth.”

That Word has been *implanted* (engrafted) into our souls as God’s means of saving us from self and sin.

Salvation is a *process*, not a static state.

Sadly, many professing Christians are staking their hope of eternal life on a mere profession of faith but with a lifestyle that reveals no experience of a substantial life-change in holiness.