

James 1:13-18 Do Not Be Deceived: Truths About Trials, Temptations, Sin, and the Character of God (part 2)

Today is part 2 of a message I preached last week. And as we've seen, the context of James is suffering. And James is concerned that they (we) suffer well. This means that we endure, we be patient, we be godly, that our "faith" works. And apparently some of those who were going through great trials were being deceived (v. 16). Some were doubting; he calls them "double-minded and unstable" (v. 8). And in our immediate context some were even blaming God for their sin, saying, "**I am tempted by God**" (v. 13). So last week, our truths were: 1) God is sovereign over all things, even our suffering. Nothing catches him by surprise. 2) God is not the author of sin; but instead: 3) We are responsible for our own sin, as our own desires are lured to take the bait of sin. And, when sin is conceived, it gives birth to death. "**For the wages of sin is death**" (Rom. 6:23).

Now, in vv. 17-18, James gives the solution to not being deceived. Using the picture of birth, He compares sinful man, as we give birth to sin with a holy God, who gives birth to life. Therefore, we need these truths this morning to help us not be deceived, to help us not doubt the character of God, to help us see what is truly wise. With this in mind, I have only 1 truth about the character of God (only one for today).

1. God is good. Look at the 1st part of v. 17: "**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above . . .**" Some of James' recipients were being deceived because they were questioning the goodness of God. Horrible trials and sufferings were coming from the hand of a sovereign God. Outwardly, they were being tested. And in these difficult circumstances they were sinning, and instead of looking inward and placing the responsibility of sin upon their own shoulders, they instead blamed God. And in blaming God and thinking God could tempt them to sin, they questioned the character of God, particularly his goodness.

Think of the first sin and fall. Eve took the fruit and gave to her husband (who was idly standing by, not leading, not protecting as a good husband). And then Adam says to God, "**The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate**" (Gen. 3:12). Eve also does not take responsibility for her sin, but instead blames the serpent (Gen. 3:13).

But, through their sin and fall, they question the goodness of God. You might ask, "*How did they do that? It seems to me they simply disobeyed.*" In Gen. 3 Satan comes to Eve and says, "*Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?*" And she says to the serpent, "*God said that we can eat of all the trees in the garden, except the one in the midst of the garden. And if we do, we will die.*" To this, the serpent says, "*you will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" In these words, Satan tempts Eve to think that God is keeping something back from her. He is saying, "*God is withholding something very good. And if you eat it, you will improve yourself and become more like God.*" In essence, he was saying, "*Does this sound like a good God?*" "*After all, this tree is beautiful, it has fruit on it, fruit that you can eat.*" Here, among other things, Eve began to question the goodness of God to her and Adam. And then what happened?

Look back at James 1:13-15: **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”** It was not wrong for Eve to desire to be more like God. It was wrong to go about it through disobedience to the God’s clear Word of instruction. It was wrong to question the character of God, especially his goodness, which was so evident in his creation and in his giving of this special sanctuary garden. In this way she was deceived. And, we are deceived if we think God is not good.

It is interesting that Moses (in the midst of a people who had just built a golden calf) asks God, **“Please show me your glory.”** And God says, **“I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord’”** (Exod. 33:19). How beautiful is this? Here, God equates his “goodness” with his glory and with his “name.” In the same God we say that, “God is love,” we also can say that “God is good.” God defines good. He has always been good. There is no greater “goodness” in the universe, for God IS good. In the midst of suffering and trials, God remains as the ONE who is good. And He cannot tempt to evil. Now, Satan tempts. And sin remains in this world. And our desires can become sinful. But, we are deceived when we question the goodness of God.

Now, it is clear to me that the Scriptures teach that God shows goodness to his creation. He holds all things together. Our little earth does not fall out of orbit. Everyday we receive light that sustains life on this planet. God brings the rain and provides us with what we need to live. And in this regard his goodness is no respecter of persons. And this goodness should lead everyone to worship Him. But the hearts of mankind are sinful. And when I look at all the verses that speak of God’s goodness, it is usually in reference to his people. Ps. 31:19: **“Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!”** Zech. 9:17: **“For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!”**

This morning as God’s people, we know God is good. In the midst of suffering and trials, when we want to question the goodness of God, we look unto Christ. If you would turn back with me to Exod. 33:17-23. Right before these verses Moses reminds the Lord that it is “his presence” that distinguishes God’s people from others. Speaking of their journey to the promised land Moses says, **“Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”** And then in v. 17: **“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.’ ‘And Moses said, Please show me your glory. And he said I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But he said, you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.’”**

Brothers and sisters, today, we have seen . . . we have known the goodness of God. And, by faith we have seen his glory. And God is with us! We know that God is good because He has given us his Son. 2 Cor. 4:6: **“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** Jesus says to us today, **“If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father”** (John 14:9). He is the presence of God! He is Emmanuel, God with us! If you have believed on the Lord Jesus, and you are united to Him by the Spirit, through the means of faith, you know what goodness is! This means that in the midst of trials and suffering, you can endure. You can be patient. You can rejoice. Why, because your sins are forgiven. And you await the “crown of life,” which God has promised to give you. OH the goodness of God in Christ. Here we see his love, his grace, his mercy, his longsuffering. God is good!

Now, as we remember the goodness of God in Christ and take the Lord’s Supper, I would like for us to read together some of God’s Words to us. Then, I will make a couple applications at the end.

Pastor: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Heb. 1:1-2)

Congregation: He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Heb. 1:3-4)

Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

Congregation: The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:9-13)

Pastor: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)

Congregation: For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (John 1:14-18).

Pastor: Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Cor. 4:1-2)

Congregation: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Cor. 4:3-5).

Pastor: For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

Application: If God is willing to give His Only Son, which is the best of gifts; for this gift leads to salvation and eternal life, how much more lesser things will he give us also. Rom. 8:32: **"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"**

Application: The goodness of God is meant to lead us to repentance. Rom. 2:4-5: **"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."**

God is good!