

Blessed endurance

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man...Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

James 1:13, 17

As James describes in this chapter the dynamics of testing and temptation, he carefully contrasts the causes and effects of the intention and work of God with those of mankind. The initial warning comes on the heels of his exhortation to believers to recognize the blessing of enduring temptation, which is coupled with reward from the Lord (v. 12). For although God allows testing for the purpose of perfecting patient endurance in our lives (vv. 2-4), we are assured that He does not tempt men to do evil. He goes on to describe how mankind is tempted to do evil because of our own sinful nature, inherited from our first parents. Thus, we must choose to either yield to our own lusts, which come from our natural tendency toward evil, or to the Spirit of the Lord, who draws us toward His ways, which are characterized by the good and perfect gifts that He bestows from above. In the face of trial, which may come by way of direct solicitation to evil, or may come indirectly as a test that might reduce our trust in God, we are called to recognize the goodness of our heavenly Father of lights who shall give good gifts to them that ask Him (Matthew 7:11).

Therefore, we are exhorted in times of trial to ask for wisdom from God, without wavering, knowing that we can seek it diligently within His perfect law of liberty (v. 25), that we may find the direction and power to be doers of the word (v. 22). It is notable that the intent with which we ask and seek should be to obey that which He reveals, and not to merely know the information. One writer has said that “you can know the will of God, if you want to know the will of God to do it, and not to vote on it.” Although He may allow the trials for the perfecting of our faith, which may also at times involve His discipline for our lives (Hebrews 12:6-11), we have this and other assurances of His utter goodness, in which we can simply trust. He will not give us a stone when we ask for bread; however, let us in turn make sure that we are not asking for a stone. May we continually seek to make the right choice with the power that He promises.