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A CLEAR DEFINITION OF THE WILL OF GOD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 9
JAMES 1:17-18

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JAMES 1:17-18 "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. Of his own will begat he us with word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

In our last study we stopped right in the middle of verse 17. We studied the good giver who gives good gifts, both material and spiritual. We also studied the perfect gift, which really means the completed gift. This perfect gift means the completed work of grace in our hearts which is always accomplished by the Word of God. So we saw that "every good act of giving" has its origin with God.

We also saw that these gifts "cometh down" and the term means that God has a great storehouse and he provides for us out of his inexhaustible supply. God made ample provision for all of our needs in eternity past and out of this great supply he provides what we need. He times his giving perfectly. He gives us exactly what we need and he gives it to us on a perfect schedule.

Now this great storehouse of God is Bible doctrine. This is illustrated for us by the experience Joseph had in Egypt. Joseph learned from God that seven years of famine was coming to the people of Egypt. So he led the nation to put away vast stores of grain and when the seven lean years came, they had plenty for themselves and for many in the outside world.

That's what Bible doctrine is to us. We take it in day by day so when the time comes when we can't take it in, we have it on reserve and can call on it for our use. The time will come for all of us when we can't take in Bible doctrine. Therefore, if you take it in now when you can, then in the future when the lean years come and the emergency comes, you will have the resources you need to see you through the hard days.

Listen to this

This business of grabbing a promise and shooting up a prayer when you get caught in a jam is not the answer. You have to draw on the depth of your experience, the inner storehouse of doctrine you have before hand stored up in your human spirit. The doctrine must be there, but you can't have it then if you haven't stored it up before.

Look at verse 17 again.

JAMES 1:17 "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." This verse says these good gifts "descend from the Father." The word is "apo" and this means from the ultimate source of God.

Then we see the words "from the Father of lights." This is a genitive of source. The Father is the source of all light. Does this mean that God the Father gives you light? The word for light is "phos" and we get such words as "phosphorous" and "phosphorescent" from this word. The Father in Heaven is the source of all light. "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." This is referring to those categories of doctrine that enlighten the soul. "Phos" means that God will show us the many various truths he has stored up for us.

We have a slang expression we use that clears this up for us. We say, "I wish you would shed a little light on this subject for me." That is exactly what the Father of lights does for us all the time and he does it through his word.

PSALM 119:130 "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

This is what the Father of lights is constantly doing for his people. Light always comes from the entrance of the Word. God the Father is the source of all truth, all light, all real victory. This is why it is so necessary to take in truth every day. The Pastor-teacher, therefore, links his mind with the Father of lights and he in turn gives the truth to the people from God's source of lights.

Illustration

Suppose we had a device rigged up to this podium so I could turn off all the lights in this room. And suppose I could turn on, with another device, the doctrinal light that is in each of your minds and let that light shine on the ceiling above your head. How bright would the light be that would be above your head? Don't hold up your hand or reply-- just think about it. Now I'll answer for many of you. For many it would be a complete blackout. For some it would be just a faint glimmer of light, and if you tried to walk in the reflection of that light, you would stumble and kill yourself.

A Bridge He Has Built

Now between you and your Heavenly Father there is a bridge, a bridge he has built out of Bible doctrine. He is the Father of lights and he stands ready to enlighten you. And remember this, an enlightened soul is capable of coping with most any situation. This word "phos" does not refer to the light of the sun or the moon or the stars, but it refers to the light that comes from Bible doctrine.

This verse says "with whom" and it means from the immediate source of whom, referring to God the Father. Then we have the word "eneimi" and it means "there is absolutely not any" variableness, neither shadow of turning. So it means God never changes. He has ten essence qualities of character and they never change. You change but he doesn't. It is impossible for him to give to you except he gives from his perfect character. The word for "variableness" is "parallage" and it means change, mutation, or shifting. This means that God is dogmatic and his Word is dogmatic. (Therefore, when you teach Scripture, don't get up and say, "Now it may be this or it may be that." That isn't teaching the Scripture at all.)

That's why the Bible says God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and it means he is always faithful and just.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:24 "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

2 THESSALONIANS 3:3 "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil."

2 TIMOTHY 2:13 "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

HEBREWS 10:23 "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

1 CORINTHIANS 1:9 "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Then this verse says "neither shadow of turning" and the word for shadow is "aposkiasma" and it means to cast a shadow. It really means an eclipse. God's grace is never eclipsed by anything.

So this verse says this--

"Every good act of giving and every completed gift keeps on being from above, coming down from the ultimate source of the Father of lights, from the immediate source of whom there is not within him any shifting or change, nor any shadow of eclipse cast over his grace."

JAMES 1:18 "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." Now if we are ever to walk on that bridge God has provided for us and really learn the score about life, we must learn to function under grace. "Of his own will" is an aorist, passive, participle of the word "boulomai." This is the strongest word for will in the Greek language. It is so strong it means God's decree in eternity past. Now in Greek the action of a Greek participle always preceded the action of the main verb. The main verb here is "begat." So this divine decree in eternity past came before any of us ever believed. "Begat" is an aorist, active, indicative of "apokueo" and it means the new birth, it refers to our being born again by faith in Christ.

So it really says, "This having been decreed in eternity past, he regenerated us by a spiritual birth." This regeneration takes place in time but the decree of it took place in eternity past. But please remember--GOD'S DECREE HAS NEVER VIOLATED FREE WILL. The moment you or I believed he gave us spiritual birth. (So the idea of the New Birth just knocks the you know what out of the psychologist and the psychiatrist who always refers back to the fact that our past and what has gone on in the past determines what we will be. The New Birth comes along and rubs that out quick and in one second of time a sinner becomes a born again child of God.)

So God has a plan for you but he will never disregard your free will. You have to choose his plan for you daily.

So at least once in your life please think about this. GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE. Now if you think your plan is better than his, you go on your merry way and live according to your plan. But remember this, you can have his plan if you want it and his plan is perfect and complete and satisfying.

Now maybe you don't have much to recommend you to God. But you just give him what you have and he will take it and will make something glorious out of it. Man looketh on the outward appearance (after you put on all your makeup) but God looketh on the heart (before you have applied any of the makeup).

Therefore we have before us the issue of free will. This leads us to a study of the doctrine of divine decrees.

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE DECREES

This verse says "Of his own will" but it means "having been decreed." God has a plan with your name on it and it was cooked up in eternity past.

1. The word "decree means plan, appointment, enactment.
PSALM 2:7 "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."
2. DEFINITION.
The decrees are defined as the sum total of the Father's plan designed in eternity past to solve the angelic conflict. This plan does not abuse the character of God or violate the free will of man.
3. THE PERSON OF THIS DOCTRINE.
This whole plan of God centers around the person of Jesus Christ
1 JOHN 3:23 "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

EPHESIANS 1:4-6 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."
4. WE ENTER THAT PLAN BY GRACE.
EPHESIANS 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
The sovereignty of God and the free will of man meet at the cross. It was accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.
5. IT IS AN INCLUSIVE PLAN.
God's plan was so designed in eternity past that it includes all events, all actions related to their causes and conditions as a part of an indivisible system, every link being a part of the integrity of the whole system. God's perfect wisdom includes everything and he knew in eternity past the end from the beginning.
6. GOD USES DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET HIS WILL DONE.
Under his plan God decrees to do some things directly and some things through agencies and some things through individuals.
7. A PLAN CONSISTENT WITH HUMAN FREEDOM.
The plan of God is consistent with human freedom and does not coherse or force human freedom. He permits free will to function in every man.
8. GOD'S WILL NEVER CAUSES SIN.
God has never condoned or caused sin. Man sinned in his free will and when God created the soul, he gave it mentality, self-consciousness, emotion, conscience, and volition--but not the old sin nature. Man created his own old sin nature, with the help of the Devil.

10. A DIFFERENCE IN DIVINE DECREES AND DIVINE LAWS.
Distinction must be made between divine decrees which are relate to the plan of God in both design and action, and divine laws which regulate human conduct and function in the universe.
11. DIVINE DECREES DO NOT ARISE FROM GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE.
The foreknowledge of God makes nothing certain. God's foreknowledge merely perceives in eternity past the things that are certain and will happen. He decrees solutions for your problems. His decree makes his plan certain. His foreknowledge merely means he knew how you would respond.
12. LOOK AT THE DIFFERENCE IN FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FOREORDINATION AND PREDESTINATION.
 - a. Predestination or the decree of God makes things certain, it establishes certainty.
 - b. Foreknowledge does not decree anything. It just shows God has sense enough to know what was going to happen but his knowing it would happen didn't make it happen.
13. LOOK NOW AT FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION.
The elect are foreknown and the foreknown are elected. God knew ahead of time the way every free will would decide at a given point in history. This does not imply divine coercion. God's plan, however, anticipates every decision of history. Billions of decisions made by humans during time were all known to him before anyone ever lived.
14. HIS DECREE MAKES PROVISION FOR THE BEST.
Since God cannot contradict his own character, he plans the best for every believer. God is perfect, therefore, his plan and provision is perfect.
15. CHRIST FITS IN WITH GOD'S DECREE.
The cross was decreed in eternity past millions of years before man was created. Salvation was planned back there by God. But the human volition of Christ fits in with that plan when in Gethsemane Christ said, "Not my will, but thine be done." Matthew 26:39 and 42. Free will in salvation can operate only in one way and that way is compatible with grace. There is no merit that can gain salvation.
16. NO DECREE OF GOD IN ITSELF OPPOSES HUMAN FREEDOM.
But once a choice is made then that choice limits your human freedom. Once you decide to travel east then that limits you and it means you can't at the same time travel west or north or south.

This 18th verse concludes with the phrase "that we should be the first fruits of his creation."

It means we are the result of his grace creation. He created us to be like him. that was God's original plan and purpose.