

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR TWO

We Reap What We Sow – The Consequence/Chapter One: Our Human Condition

As we have already discovered, every human being is sinful by nature. This means that sin isn't merely an action, it is a condition that influences every decision we make. As a result, we make wrong choices that generate sinful actions which in turn produce adverse consequences for our lives. The reap/sow dynamic cannot be circumvented, even though we often deceive ourselves into thinking that it can. One New Testament passage in particular, vividly describes this negative process, placing the individual squarely in the middle of it, making him completely responsible for the repercussions that proceed from it. James 1:13-15 states the following –

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

The goal of James in these verses is clear. He desires to break through any self-deception (v16), about the nature of God, man and sin. He begins with the nature of God in v13, in order to confront the issue of blame-shifting. As outrageous as it may seem, James is quoting those who shift the blame away from themselves and toward a holy God. Yet we should not be surprised. When God confronts Adam about his sin in Genesis 3, Adam says in v12, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” The original sin is followed by the original blame-shift. Adam didn't see his sin as being primarily his fault. Instead, he blames Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit, and ultimately blames God for giving him Eve.

James tells us that when we sin, the responsibility for our behavior lies squarely with us, never with God. There may be external issues and extenuating circumstances involved in sin, but God is never a contributing factor when we do sin. In stark contrast to the purity of God's character stands the corrupt nature of man. Here is where the responsibility for evil behavior resides. James tells us in v14 that temptation and the corresponding sinful response is a highly individual (“each one”), intensely personal (“is tempted”), and deeply internal (“his own lust”) occurrence. The word “lust” describes a strong desire and can refer to something positive or negative. Its use here is obviously negative and speaks of the strong propensity toward sinful behavior which exists within each of us. This lust generates a vicious circle that is virtually inescapable, as indicated by the verbs “carried away” and “enticed.” Both terms come from the realm of fishing and hunting. They refer to “luring with bait.” The irony is that the person who succumbs to sin is responsible for creating and baiting a trap in which he becomes his own self-inflicted victim.

The picture here is brief, yet pointed, in regard to sin and its inevitable consequence. Lust is conceived when an evil desire reaches its full potential. It gives birth to sin when a specific sinful action takes place. The wrongful behavior then grows and develops, as it becomes a habitually ingrained element in the character of an individual. This self-imposed prison of sin becomes a downward spiral that hits bottom in death.

We do indeed reap what we sow! As our fallen human condition expresses itself in a variety of negative ways, some of the suffering we experience during the course of our life is undeniably self-imposed.