

## ***Promised to those who love Him***

Up to this point in our study of the book of James, Christians have a lot to overcome. As a Christian, one must be prepared, sometimes literally, to leave everything they know and follow Christ. So many believe that this is selfish of God or unreasonable of Him to ask so much of us, but is this true?

First let us look at what some would believe to be “selfish” of God. Selfish is defined as “lacking consideration for others; concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure” (Dictionary Version 1.0.1 (1.0.1) Copyright 2005 Apple Computer, Inc.). Is God a person that lacks consideration for others? Is God a person that is concerned chiefly with His own personal profit or pleasure? The answer can be found in Scripture; so let us begin our search of them. God is creator. In Genesis 1, God creates everything in six days: heaven, earth, and all that lies within them. On the sixth day, God created mankind, chapter two describes this in more detail. We can read both of these chapters and we can see that everything that God created, which includes ourselves, was “good.” Then Adam and Eve commit the first sin. Paul tells us in Romans that, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned,” (Romans 5:12). Along with sin entering the world, death also entered. Sin and death spread to all men. Why? Paul tells us the reason, “for that all have sinned.” When Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, they gained the knowledge of good and evil. They gained the knowledge of sin. What is sin? “Sin is the transgression of the law,” (I John 3:4). This is a very simple definition to understand. When we sin, we transgress the law that God has set before us. We are told in scripture, “God is Holy” (Psalm 99:9) and “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). We become separated from God by our own doings. In Isaiah we are told, “your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). It is not that God desires us to be separated from him, but He can have no association with sin and darkness. His desires are to the contrary. We learn in II Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” and in Matthew 23:37 that Jesus tells the Jews, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” It is on our part that the problem lies. God wants us to come to Him but we refuse!

So is what God tells us to do unreasonable? Once again we turn to the scriptures. In Romans 12:1-2 we read, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” This one verse draws our whole discussion together. We are pleaded by Paul, an apostle sent and inspired by God, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. This idea includes our thoughts on God calling us to put Him first and everything else at a distant second. It includes sacrificing everything that we may know to follow the true and living God. This verse discusses being holy. By putting God first and following Him above all others, we can not help but be sanctified and holy. When we serve God and

present our entire life as a living sacrifice unto Him, a distinction arises between us and the world. We become light and can have no association with darkness just like our heavenly Father. This is what makes us acceptable to God. By being sanctified by His word, we become one as Jesus and the Father are one (cf. John 17:17, 21). God can once again be joined to us, because we are no longer in darkness but in the light. Paul tells us that this is our reasonable service. The act of sanctifying ourselves and becoming acceptable unto God is not something beyond our reach. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians the tenth chapter and in verse thirteen, we have a promise given to us. We have discussed this promise before but it is central part to Christian life: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God is faithful; He cannot lie. He tells us that we CAN live the way that He asks of us.

So what makes it so reasonable to do all of this? This is where our texts comes in. Up to this point in James, he has laid out somethings that may be hard for a Christian to do, and in verse twelve he gives the reward of it all, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." An other promise given to us, that if we stay with God He will reward us with Heaven. Our mortal minds cannot comprehend Heaven in its fullness. We can only use things that we do know to describe parts of it. John gives us some insight into a little of what Heaven will be like in Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." How great and wonderful God is! He promises that we can do all that He has commanded and promises if we do we will receive eternal joy with Him in Heaven! We will receive that crown of life when we endure this life. The key to it all is enduring this life and its trials. Also in Revelation 2:10 it is told to us that, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Let us all be truly thankful for all that we have been given and let us all look forward to that day that we receive our rest from this life.