

The Human Thought World
From James 1:12-18
Copyright, J. Michael Strawn

From James 1:12-18

THE HUMAN THOUGHT WORLD: PURSUIT OF APPROVAL (v.12), PART 1

#1. The human thought world, the mind and the thoughts in it, occupies the intermediate position between God and the world. The thought world, however, has *an immediate standing* before the Lord. It is approved by God or its standing is that of disapproval.

"Blessed is a man"

- "who perseveres under trial"
- "for once he has been approved"
- "he will receive the crown of life"
- "which the Lord has promised"
- "to those who love Him."

Divine approval comes to one "under" the duress and turmoil of "trial". Achieving approval is not easy nor automatic.

#2. Inherent in the pursuit of approval is perseverance. To do that means that one must position the mind to ignore the force of temporal conditions; whatever those conditions may be.

#3. The Almighty has ordained what we may call *the approval syntax*. Syntax is an ordered arrangement; like the words in a meaningful sentence. Following the syntax one can pursue and achieve approval.

#4. The syntax: First, there is a prefix to the pursuit. It is the love one has for God ("love Him").

The prefix assures motive-->
then comes the "trial"-->
trial indicates a behavior ("perseveres")-->
at that point comes approval ("approved")-->
finally there is the reward ("Blessed", "crown of life").

#5. James tells us something of irreducible importance. The trials of life, indistinguishable from our total of experience, have a timeline. We are instructed to lay the approval syntax on the timeline of experience.

#6. Approval is not a function of the church, society, the self nor human experience. It is the province of God. Controlling concerns about the temporal outcomes of our experience, therefore, are subject to the power and leverage of the approved mind.

From James 1:12-18. THE HUMAN THOUGHT WORLD: A DANGEROUS PLACE (v.13, 14), PART 2

#1. The question is: How does a situation, any situation, become converted into a temptation? James reports that it is a *willful conversion, processed by the human mind*. The development of a temptation is engineered, as the whole function of reasoning is subordinated to personal indulgence. That makes the personal thought world a very dangerous place.

#2. Anyone who believes and says that "I am being tempted by God" (v.13) is misreading the character of the Almighty.

#3. "...God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone" v.13. James exonerates the Lord of trying to trap us.

#4. The energy of this conversion is supplied by "lust" v.14. A situation presents itself. But then human lust for self-gratification goes active. This factor begins to change the situation, any situation, into an *opportunity to indulge the flesh*".

#5. Deception is inherent in all this. The one controlled by lust, thinks he or she is going "to use the situation." But it is he or she that is being used-- perhaps to the point of ruin. We can be "carried away and enticed" v.14.

#6. The mind is not working, as it should, under the dominion of the word of God. *Causation is not inherent in the situation*. It is the power of lust.

#7. Evil imagination is going to drive out all higher considerations. So the situation *collapses into imaginative outcomes*. Achieving the fruition of the temptation is the focus, perhaps the obsession.

The human thought world becomes a dangerous place. Temptation and its promises always overflows its particulars. Wars start this way. Ruination is its end.

From James 1:12-18. THE HUMAN THOUGHT WORLD: THE TWO USES OF THE MIND (v.15), PART 3

#1. James relies upon an analogy of birth to explain the workings of the mind. The thought world is the realm of abstractions, ideas, words and symbols. Birth is a natural phenomenon. What do these two realms share in common?

#2. "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" v.15.

#3. The shared element is *a developmental track*. This track runs from the point and place of conception-->to materialization. The language manifold of this verse alone asserts that there are *two contradictory uses of the mind*.

#4. One use is the lust for temporal gratification. Lust becomes the developmental field of sin. It gives birth to the fruition of death, dissolution. and despair.

#5. The other use is obedience to the revealed truth of Scripture; the developmental field of faith. Wherein all abstractions, ideas, thoughts, words and symbols, appertaining to any circumstance, are brought parallel to revelation.

#6. The wrong use of the thought world results in a conscious distortion of time, life, history and circumstance.

#7. These two different conditions of the thought world are sufficient to explain human behavioral history. Both personal and collective. In other words, they explain our thought world and its projective behavior.

#8. The conditions of thought are priorities for people of faith. Indeed, biblical faith drives a wedge between the two contradictory uses of the mind. If we hold a kind of faith that does not do that or cannot do that, then the church is lost.

#9. *Faith is a condition of thought*. Temptation is the condition of thought antithetical to God and to life.

From James 1:12-18. THE HUMAN THOUGHT WORLD: ITS SUPERNATURAL GROUND (v.17), PART 4

#1. Never a popular idea, the world of thought was always intended by God to be grounded in a reality beyond time and beyond the particulars of our temporal setting. The entire biblical language manifold is devoted to teaching this.

#2. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" v.17.

#3. Implicit in this verse is *the thought* that there is a direct relation existing between God --> and time.

It is a "coming down". This truth is the determinant ground for human reasoning. That relation must affect every human circumstance and condition. Such a perfect thought cannot be eclipsed by the human thought world tied to the limiting case of human experience.

#4. The second implicit thought is this: The Almighty has tied His word-->to His eternal character. This is so because "with Him there is no variation or shifting shadow".

#5. Therefore, the generalization is this: Whatever the Lord says--is. This proposition holds from one generation of believers to another. In consequence then, the thought world is not to be grounded in what people think of as *the human horizon*. That horizon includes culture, current sociology, accepted epistemologies (ways of knowing) and human lived experience.

#6. The only sufficient ground for the human thought world is the Word of God. Without that ground, what the world calls "progress" is a myth.

From James 1:12-18. THE HUMAN THOUGHT WORLD: A SPIRITUAL STATE OF BEING (v.18), PART 5

#1. The personal thought world *is set*, James says, to the biblical expectations of it. The believer follows those revealed expectations; not his "dreams."

#2. "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures" v.18.

#3. The Lord expects the believer to offer his personal thought world as a sacrifice of "first fruits". Therefore, the mind itself has an imposed significance: Its very function becomes a symbol of the prior eternal personage.

#4. The human thought world, yours and mine, has a purpose beyond this world. And this *atemporal (or timeless) purpose* is in direct contact with "*the word of truth*."

#5. To sever the thought world's dependence upon scripture is to redirect its eternal significance and symbolism.

#6. The most wonderful thing: In spite of our shortcomings, the Almighty wishes to "exercise" His will through us.

#7. The way the mind functions, in this world, is to be our acknowledgement of God, the Giver of all good things, our personal indebtedness and our gratitude to Him.