

SCRIPTURAL “RED FLAGS”

No. 5

James 1:16 contains another “red flag,” warning us against deception: “Be not deceived, my beloved brethren (ASV).” This warning looks backward to what James had just written about temptation, sin, and death. However, it also anticipates the declaration of the goodness and immutability of God in the next verse. Note some observations about this warning:

1. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that God is the source of the enticements and seductions of Satan that appeal to our fleshly desires (v. 13). God despises sin. Rather than trying to get us to sin, it is His will that all men forsake sin in repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Just as God cannot be tempted, He does not tempt anyone to sin. One who blames God for sin in the world or for his personal sins errs grievously. The folly of the skeptics that claim they cannot believe in God because He is allegedly to blame for sin in the world is thus exposed.
2. Sin does not occur because God tempts men, but because men allow themselves to be enticed to unlawfully satisfy various fleshly desires (v. 14). When one satisfies his lusts in a way that violates God’s law, he sins. Sin, if persisted in, results in death—eternal separation from God (v. 15; cf. Rom. 6:23). Men may call various sins “sicknesses,” and there may be some ways in which some of them may “overlap” and be thus identified (e.g., alcohol and other drug addictions, sexual perversions, etc.). However, since such practices violate God’s law, they are no less sins just because medical science calls them “illnesses.” They will damn the soul eternally if not repented of, regardless of what medical authorities call them (1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal.

5:19–21; et al.). God has never required of us anything that we are incapable of doing. We must not be deceived about this matter.

3. Rather than setting before man enticements to sin, God gives only good gifts to men (v. 17). He was this way from the beginning and He does not change. In spite of this, men frequently blame God for every sort of tragedy. It is true that He has at times used natural means to physically punish and destroy rebellious men (e.g., the Flood), but these are exceptional cases with stated purposes. The rule is that our God is a benevolent God who gives only good and perfect gifts. Our physical universe, the home, the Bible, His Son, the church, the plan of salvation, and Heaven at last for His faithful ones are examples of his beneficial generosity to mankind. Men charge God foolishly when they blame Him for evil and suffering.

“Be not deceived, my beloved brethren” about these significant Truths.

—Dub McClish

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