

## **Good Gifts from the Good Giver**

### **James 1:16-18, 21**

The last time we were in James we examined Trials and Temptations from Verses 12-15.

Today, James leaves the theme of trials, which he will reexamine, and expands on the theology and themes of what he has taught.

As we endure through the trials and tests of this life – by the grace of God – the grace of God takes us all the way to glory – represented by the CROWN OF LIFE.

Temptations to sin do not come from God – for how can God who is PERFECT in every way tempt anyone to sin?

Temptations come from our own lusts – desire is conceived and gives birth to sin – but God gives us the NEW BIRTH.

Today -- James expands upon the perfection of God – and contrasts that with the changeableness that is a feature of every other living creature, we could even say of ALL CREATION.

Change and decay are all around us.

It won't always be that way – when God brings in the new heaven and the new earth.

### **I. The Pastoral Admonition v. 16**

#### **A. Do not be Deceived**

It is very possible to be deceived.

Satan is the GREAT deceiver – who desires to deceive the whole world.

Sin is the GREAT deceiver – which arises from within – from desires that are not properly mortified – or are improperly fed.

Self-deception is the worst deception of all – because we might see through Satan’s wiles – and we might be able to withstand the temptation that is arising from within –

BUT how can we be delivered from SELF-DECEPTION?

When you THINK you are right?  
When you do not realize the wrong course you are on?  
When you are operating out of MIS-INFORMATION?

How many of you – no show of hands – but how many of you sincerely believed that man was the author of his own salvation.

-- That God merely OFFERS salvation to everyone.  
-- That Jesus died on the cross – equally – and paid for the sins of EVERYONE – not to really and truly save them – but to merely GIVE THEM the OPPORTUNITY to be saved.

Misinformation – it is preached that way from many pulpits.  
Election and the absolute sovereignty of God is considered to be error in those circles.

Man’s free will is ELEVATED to the reason some men are saved and some men are lost – instead of realizing the ONLY PLACE a lost man’s free will can take him is to HELL itself.

Do not be deceived -

## **B. My Brothers**

Here is PASTOR JAMES coming in pastorally again.  
Not like a Lord.  
Not like a tyrant.  
Not ranting and berating his readers.

My brothers.

The brother of the Lord – calling US his brothers.  
But WARNING US of the real danger.

What is it he wants to warn us about?

What we have already read.  
What we are about to read.  
It's a transition verse – to get our attention.

## **II. The Creator is Our Good Father v. 17a**

### **A. He is the Father of Lights**

The exact terminology “Father of Lights” appears only here in the Bible, but the concept is throughout Scripture.

Who made the Heavens – by the Word of His power.

The heathen worshipped the Sun, Moon and even the Stars (the Zodiac).

Our great God MADE these things.

The lesser light – the moon and the stars – to rule the night.  
But day comes – and the stars “disappear” and the moon can only be faintly seen at times.

We cannot even begin to comprehend the vastness of the universe – and we find ourselves in wonder – asking – WHY did God make all these things – and with all that He made -- why would He then have His eye on ME?

No matter HOW VAST THE UNIVERSE – be aware – that God is Omni-present – and by His Spirit is in every place.

The great light – the sun to rule the day.

The sun.

We certainly are feeling the sun here in SoCal this month.

BUT – our great and wise God positioned the earth, and positioned the sun and the axis of the earth in JUST THE RIGHT WAY – that we are able to live and thrive on this planet.

Now, James is not writing a scientific treatise.

But he hasn't said anything that contradicts true science.

Our Father is the Father of everything that is created!  
We can think of Heaven as "out there" – or "up there".

Here come the good gifts – from the good giver!  
Before we get into that – one more thought

## **B. Light Contrasted with Darkness**

Men love darkness rather than light – because their deeds are evil.

Turn on the light – and the darkness is dispelled.  
Turn on the light – and the cockroaches flee.  
Turn on the light – and we are able to see!

If you know your Bibles at all – and James assumes we do:

**1. We do not need to prove to you that God is the Creator**  
– if He isn't the entirety of Scripture is A LIE – which is  
exactly what many who espouse evolutionary thought would  
love to be able to prove – which they can't.

**2. We do not need to prove to you that LIGHT in Scripture**  
**symbolizes what is good** – and darkness symbolizes evil.

-- *God is light – and in Him is no darkness at all* (1 John 1:5)

Night isn't itself sinful – God Himself separated the light from  
the darkness – and IT WAS GOOD.

But – in Heaven – there is no night there – because THE  
LAMB is the LIGHT – and His light is never extinguished.

## **C. Every good gift comes from Him**

Does everything come directly from the Hand of God? No.

Our confession speaks of “second causes”.

Our sin doesn't come directly from the hand of God— James already gave us the sequence. Desire – conception – birth – death.

That's the NATURAL sequence.  
That's what we should EXPECT.

-- But God is sovereign even over our sin  
– and God can even use our sin to work together to glorify Himself.

THAT should **never** be the goal of the Christian.  
THAT is NO EXCUSE for us to sin – and just figure it will all work out OK.

Pharaoh is the chief example in Scripture of God's sovereignty over sin  
– God raised him up – for the express purpose to have glory over him as he stubbornly refused to let the children of Israel go.

God is sovereign over sin and sinful creatures  
– but you would never want to be Pharaoh.

### **III. Our Immutable God v. 17b**

Here is a doctrine that is under fire in our day.

There are those who DIRECTLY OPPOSE the idea of an unchangeable God.

We call them OPEN theists or PROCESS theologians.

It's nothing new – it's just wrapped in new scholarship – and has even taken in some who should be evangelical.

It's a natural result of REFUSING TO BELIEVE in the absolute sovereignty of God.

Now, he becomes the God who learns.  
He becomes the God who makes mistakes – but gets better.

-- In the OT He's mean and vindictive  
– by the time we come to the NT – He's a lot more mellow.

Our God is IMMUTABLE.  
He DOES NOT CHANGE.

He is INCAPABLE of CHANGE – because change is for the better or for the worse – and how can God get BETTER and still be God.

Every living creature CHANGES.  
We grow – we mature – we begin to deteriorate and die.

Man himself is changeable – and there are many things WE SHOULD change.

Remember what James said about STABILITY.

v. 4 -- Be perfect, be mature, be complete – lacking nothing.

v. 6-7 – that is the double-minded man

James is CONTRASTING the unstable, double-minded man with the SOLID ROCK of UNCHANGEABLENESS that is Our God!

No variableness.

Not even a shadow of a change.

Very hard to translate literally into English – it is an idiom – but James has made his point clearly enough that a baby Christian can understand what he is saying.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD is under attack in evangelical circles – even in Reformed circles -- even those circles would still cry AGAINST process theology. **The seeds of theological disintegration** are there!

PINK – ATTRIBUTES OF GOD – James 1:17 is his main verse.

**1. God is immutable in His essence.**

Mal. 3:6 – *I am the Lord – I change not.*

Only he can say, “*I am that I am*”. Ex. 3:14

**2. God is immutable in His attributes.**

Whatever His attributes were – before the universe was created  
– remain His IMMUTABLE attributes.

His power – unchanged.

His wisdom – not possible to increase.

Ours will be forever – we are the creature.

We will be learning and growing FOR ALL  
ETERNITY – yet we will never achieve GOD-  
HOOD.

We will never exhaust our marveling and learning  
about our great God as He reveals more and more  
of Himself.

His holiness – unchangeable – even with the entrance of  
sin.

**3. God is immutable in His counsel.**

Rom. 11:29 – *the gifts and calling of God are w/o repentance.*

This is the hole that many who profess to know God fall into:

**Gen. 6:5-8**

v. 6 – *sorry* -- can be translated *repented*

v. 6 – *grieved in His heart*

Ah – here is the God who FEELS PAIN.

Here is the God who SUFFERS.

Here is the God who WE were able to hurt!

Do you ever tell your kids that?

Don't do that.

It makes God sad.

Not a good way to teach right and wrong, it can easily put wrong ideas into the mind of your young one.

“When speaking of Himself, God frequently accommodates His language to our limited capacities. He describes Himself as clothed with bodily members, as eyes, ears, hands. He speaks of Himself as walking, or rising early; yet He neither slumbers nor sleeps.”

-- Some Mormons deny anthropomorphism.  
Their God DOES have hands and feet and eyes.

-- Some Christians refuse to give credence to anthropomorphism  
**Attributing or having human feelings,**

from *anthrōp-* + *pathos* **experience**

Does God experience the world the way WE experience the world?

This is beyond us.

This is something to which we cannot relate.

But there is an IDEA here.\

So God accommodates Himself to our child-like understanding.

But we are not manipulating or changing God.

And He is not HOPING for anything.

We live in hope – one day we won't.

We live by faith – one day we won't.

One thing we will ALWAYS have – and one day have it PERFECTLY is LOVE.

*Now abideth faith, hope and love – but the greatest of these is love.*



#### IV. We are the New Creation of the Creator v. 18, 21

He is the great CREATOR.

We (as Christians) are His NEW CREATION.

-- Salvation is THE WORK OF GOD.

It comes to us by HIS WILL (v. 18)

It comes to us by HIS WORD (v. 18)

It comes to us to CHANGE US (v. 18)

-- It is implanted in us BY GOD and received BY FAITH (v. 21)

-- Salvation comes to us in THREE TENSES.

We WERE saved by the Word.

We ARE BEING saved by the Word.

We WILL BE SAVED by the Word.

Verse 21 makes perfect sense when we connect it to verse 18.

And once again – we find James DOES NOT undermine the doctrine of the Apostle Paul – but agrees with him – in different wording.

**Galatians 6:15** -- For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a **new creation**.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** -- Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become **new**.

Paul is the great doctor who unlocks for us the great truth of FORENSIC JUSTIFICATION.

James isn't talking about that. He is talking about THE PRACTICAL CHANGE that occurs in the life of every true child of God. Paul talks about that too.

**Eph. 2:8-10** (emphasize v. 10).

Works have NO PLACE in procuring our salvation.  
Works are the natural result OF our salvation.

God made us to be HIS masterpiece.  
He created us in Christ Jesus for GOOD WORKS.  
These works were prepared BEFOREHAND.

We should walk in these good works.  
How did we formerly walk?

v. 1-2

A Christian is a NEW creature.  
Old things are passed away – all things have become new.

Salvation comes by grace – through faith – and results in good works.  
Salvation is God’s gift – and in NO WAY is earned or merited.

No such thing as a unbeliever Christian.  
No such thing as a fruitless Christian.

God doesn’t plant barren fruit trees.  
If God gives life – He also gives fruit.  
Some 30 fold – some 60 fold – some 100 fold.

NONE who are zero fold.

Do you know Christ?  
Has God changed YOUR HEART?  
Have you ever bowed the knee to Him and cried out, “What would you have me to do LORD?”