

Jas 1v17

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[0 : 00] The book of James and I want to stress really one of the emphases of James in verse 17. So I read that verse as a kind of controlling text for the things I'll say in the next few minutes.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation or shadow due to change. I read verse 18 as well, of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruit of his creatures.

And in so doing, James draws the attention of his hearers here anyhow to God's goodness and God's greatest gift to humanity.

Or as it were, the reality that someone who is good usually manifests this by being generous. We usually associate goodness with generosity. And the reason why James is concerned to speak about God's goodness here is because, as you have noticed earlier in the book of James, one of the main themes, in fact in the whole book and certainly has been stressed earlier in chapter 1, is just the reality that Christians face in having trials in the world.

And James is helping these Christians to think through how to respond to trial. And in many ways he has even mentioned that trials are things that God uses to make Christians better.

[1 : 26] God in some way brings these trials their way. And we have enough from the rest of scriptures to conclude that God expects believers to expect to go through trials. And James is also conscious of how sometimes within trials believers face temptations.

That is, they might be tempted to unbelief or tempted to do that which is inconsistent with their faith. And whilst James stresses that under no conditions, under no circumstances, should Christians act in a way that is inconsistent with their faith.

Trials are difficult, but God gives the wisdom and the strength to go through them. And God is using them to make you more like your savior. And so don't sin against them. There is no excuse for sinning against the Lord or doing that which is inconsistent with his law.

He realizes that one of the things that they might suggest or they might be facing this in their minds is, well if God is God and wants us to do that which is good, if God wants us to be good Christians, why does he allow trials to come when he knows trials often cause us to face temptations?

And we are tempted by these trials we go through. Why does God even tempt us to do things that are wrong when he wants us to do right? And James says, whoa, you begin to veer off there.

[2 : 46] So you know, quite strongly he says in verse 16, if you begin to think that God is the type of God that makes someone do evil, or that wants someone to do evil, or that really ever does anything that is evil, you're being deceived.

He says, don't be deceived. You know, someone is getting the better of you. Perhaps in James' mind, this is the kind of trick that Satan uses to turn people away from God.

When they start to think that God can do evil, and when they begin to, when they fail then to realize how good God is. So not only does James say to them, listen, God just doesn't make you do evil.

You know, God will, and God doesn't do evil. He says quite emphatically and positively, he says, God does that which is good. You know, every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God.

He can't be more kind of absolute in his affirmation. You don't understand just how good God is, and how good God has been. And this is preeminent and revealed in the way God gives gifts.

[3 : 52] If he was evil, or if he had any bit of evil in him, then how come he gives so much? And he kind of says, you know, everything you enjoy in this world, every gift that people enjoy, really comes from the maker.

It's this kind of view that believers have of the living God, this kind of view that the scriptures present about God, that he's not just a God who sits back and folds his hands and allows the world to run its course.

When we enjoy the good gifts of a beautiful creation, when you enjoy the wonderful gift of, some of you last night, you prepared for today.

You knew you were going to be here at ten past one. You knew that you're going to leave here if the preacher finishes on time by 1.30, 1.40 or so. And you head to work, and you had meetings, and some of you studied for meetings, and some of you are hoping to seal a deal today or something. You're hoping that something goes your way. Some of you have promised to meet with friends later, or to meet with family later. And we take these things for granted, but the Christian view is, these come from a God who controls all these things, and who just does these for people.

[5 : 00] He does this to them. And so the scriptures can say, for example, that those who think of God should never forget how good God is. Right? Psalm 103. Don't forget God's benefits, how gracious God is.

God is a God of blessings. And so really and truly, if people were thinking properly, the scriptures would lead us in the direction of understanding, we don't know how blessed we have been.

And that's why one of the greatest sins is to disregard our maker. Because he is consistently, constantly blessing us. And so James says, this is who God is. This is what God is like.

And actually, one of the tricks of the devil perhaps, and one of the sad deceptions that people go through, is thinking that because, for example, there is trouble in our world, and there is trouble, and because sometimes we see agony, and we see suffering, and we see sometimes evil in ourselves, we start to think, well, the God who made this world can't be good.

You know, if there is a God, and he made this world, well, surely he isn't good, because I know there is so much trouble in the world. And James says, that's a huge deception, because it stops people from really contemplating truly what God is like, when really God is good.

[6 : 06] And this should make him all the more approachable. And it should fill us all the more with a longing to know who he is, and what he is like. And what James actually has said already is, if you're wondering what the reason for evil is, if you're looking for where evil comes from, don't worry about looking at God, who's always given that which is good.

Look at ourselves. Look at our world. Look at what man has done with the good God has given him. It's not so much that the creation is evil.

It's not that God has made things that are evil. It's that men have done evil with the good that God has done. It's that men have consistently, for example, disregarded their maker, and tried their best to usurp his authority, or to ignore his law and principles, which would have allowed them to live a fulfilled life.

One of the commandments of the Bible, the fifth commandment, when it addresses how, one of the ten commandments, sorry, which is the fifth commandment, when it addresses how parents are to be respected.

And I think Christians have always thought that, even though that commandment is couched in, kind of parental terms, so the commandment literally says, honor your father and mother, so respect your parents.

[7 : 20] That it really was, it's really representative of a whole principle of living, where God expects us to respect those who he places in authority over us. So not just our children to respect their parents, but employees to their employers, and citizens to their government, and so on and so forth.

That actually God, God expects people to work in order and hierarchy. And you know, attached to that commandment is a promise, that the scriptures say, you know, if children obey their parents, and respect their parents, they will live fulfilled lives, they will have a prosperous life, they will live long, life will be full and rich.

And again, you may apply that to just the all of life, with the scripture saying, you know, if people respected authority properly, there would usually be peace in a land, and there will be prosperity. I say that to say this, what God has done, is usually given us principles, of how to live in the world he made.

What human beings have done, by and large, is ignore them. And then expect to get on fine, even though they've ignored, the principles that a good God has given them to run by.

It's not so much that God is God, is that we find that we are, you may say evil, or bad, because we have just not done, what God has said. And James, then presses on to this, it's one thing to say someone is good, because they give.

[8 : 34] It's another thing to say someone is good, because they give to those people, who don't deserve, what they receive from them. You know, it's one thing if I help out a friend, and if I give to a

family member, it's another thing if I give to someone, who I don't know, who's a stranger to me. But it's maybe even more so, if I give to a stranger, who has just done me wrong. Right, you know, if I help out the man, who kind of robbed me last night. You know, that kind of thing. You say, he's really good. And when James turns our attention, to the gift that God gives, which he calls, the gift of a kind of a new birth. God bringing us forth. He's really saying about, how God looks upon a world, of men and women, who by and large, always disregard his law. Who, who, who, we still, we still lie, when he tells us not to lie. We steal, when he tells us not to steal. We, we basically, ignore the maker of the heaven and earth. We don't want to worship him. We don't want to have anything to do with him. Not so much because we're not convinced he's there, but because we're convinced that if we, convince ourselves, or if we remind ourselves of the fact that he is there, then we maybe just have to worship him, and reckon with him.

[9 : 41] And that's the one thing we don't want to do. And James shows us that actually, God keeps giving to those people. And God is, he keeps giving, and he gives this particular gift, of what we call the new birth in Christianity, friends.

So, so, so, so, so what God does is, he looks at men who are so far from him. He looks at men who are so estranged from him. And he reminds us, that the greatest gift we can have in this life, is the gift of knowing our God. Of being reconciled to him. The world will continue, friends, to be, as it were, in a bad state. We will continue to have to reckon with the fact that there is so much sorrow in the world. So much agony in the world. So much so that we could become heavily pessimistic, and without hope, and kind of hopeless. Because, what is the meaning of life? It's kind of vain. Whatever I do, whatever, whatever I enjoy, it still doesn't take away from the fact that people are suffering. It still doesn't take away from the fact that, for example, we all have to one day leave this beautiful world, and leave life, and go to the grave. And what is truly the meaning of life? And James says, the meaning of life is knowing the God who made us.

[10 : 49] The big problem with human beings, is that we've gone far from the God who made us. What God does, is show his goodness, by giving us this gift, of his son. By really himself coming down, looking at our situation, and saying, I'm concerned for falling humanity.

And then granting the gift to the world, of men coming to know how to have fellowship with God. And, he gives us a new life. Right? If we trust in his son, Jesus Christ. He, he, he, he, he reconciles us to himself. The gift of having our sins forgiven. God gives us that. You know, he gives us, he gives us the gift, James says, in accordance with the truth. So, how does God, how does God give us these gifts? How do we receive the gift of God's, of God's goodness to men, whereby we come to know him? How does God give us himself? By giving us the truth.

And, it's a wonderful thing, that God should meet with us that way. In a way that all of us can relate to. Right? We, we, we, we come here, some of us on these, for these meetings. And, this is how God gives himself to men.

[11 : 51] Not in a way that's over complicated. Not by asking them to do things they can't achieve. Not by pilgrimages. Not by washings, that some of you might, you know, stare far from. But by just, using, actually, men, humans like ourselves, to explain the truth to us.

By giving us a book that contains his truth. This is the almighty God, full of power. When we begin to think of him, we really just can't comprehend him, but he makes a way that we can know what he's like. He tells us, in the truth, and I think the truth that, that James has in mind, when he says, he brings, he gives us new birth by, the word of truth, is the truth of the gospel. You know, and it's a message of hope. It's God saying, tell men and women who are so far from me, that because of what Jesus Christ has done on the cross, they can come near to me. That in the work of Jesus, sinners are drawn closer to God. And when we speak about the work of Jesus, it's just a reminder that God doesn't ask us to do anything, to fix this broken relationship. Not in and of our own selves. Jesus Christ does all that needs to be done, for this relationship to be fixed. On our part, we just come and receive his work. We come and we say, Lord, we acknowledge, God, we acknowledge, that we don't know our maker.

[13 : 01] We acknowledge how far we are from you. But we also acknowledge that you're a God who is good, and who has kept on giving, so much so that you've given your son to die for sinners. And I would receive this gift.

I would have it. And friends, one thing I, the thing that I would say to you all, as you go back, I know, wherever you go back to, you go back home, you go back to work. I hope you would contemplate this, this greatest gift that God gives to the world.

The gift of knowing him. The gift of knowing your maker. And by putting your trust in him, then being able to explain, in a sense, having an explanation for all the evil around you.

And it may come just down to this, that although everything seems to be, there seems to be a lot wrong in this world, although there's things that make us cry, there's things that disappoint us, God is still in control.

And God is good. And God hasn't forsaken, God doesn't forsake us, if we draw to him and his son Jesus Christ. Just that alone, friends, knowing that I don't have to carry the guilt of my own sin.

[14 : 01] But when I see a perishing world, and I realize that I deserve to be perishing with the world, because I'm a sinner just like the world. But God speaks, and God gives a gift, and it's a gift of his son, it's a gift then of hope, that tells all of us, men and women, that we can all come to him, we can all put our faith, in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and once again receive the gift, of a good God.

The gift of knowing that we're God's children. Amen. Okay, let me, I just close this with a word of prayer. Amen.