



Consider His Goodness!

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Scripture: James 1:16-18

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:16–18, ESV)

It is important to note the following:

- The first 15 verses of James chapter one are about who we should be in Christ and how we should conduct ourselves.
- The remainder of chapter one through the end of the letter, James writes about who we should be in Christ and how we should conduct ourselves!
- Our text today (specifically verses 17 and 18), is NOT about us! Rather, it is a shift of perspective from us to the Lord!

Let's begin by addressing two initial questions:

1. What was James' previous thought?

Answer: James previous thought was related to temptation (vs 12-15). We are blessed when we stand under trial. However, temptation is not of God but of ourselves and ultimately leads to death.

2. In what should we not be deceived?

Answer: Believers should not be deceived into attributing fleshly temptations to our God. God cannot be tempted by Satan and therefore cannot and would not use Satan's means to tempt believers. The blame falls squarely on us!

With this in mind, James makes a contrast between mankind (the cause of sin and death) and the holiness of our God (the giver of life). In these verses James pauses so that we may consider God's supreme goodness and his divine nature.

****This is important because the weight of our trials and temptations will decrease
as our perspective of God increases!****

Acknowledge God's Goodness

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...” (James 1:17a)

- The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good. All he does and is, is worthy of approval.
- God's “approval” in goodness is not approved by us (we don't know what good is until we see it)! God's approval is by his own approval. Therefore, good is what God approves.
- The two “gifts” that we see in our text are two different things.

- “Good gift” refers to the act of giving (how God gives)
- “Perfect gift” refers to the gift itself (what God gives)

“Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. (Lk 18:19)”

“we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Ro 8:28)”

- Beyond the fact that God is good, what God does is also good:
 - Everything that God made in the creation account was deemed “good” and “very good.”
 - *“You [Lord] are good and do good; teach me your statutes. (Ps 119:68)”*
 - *“John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.” (John 3:27)*
 - Paul told the Corinthians, *“What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (1 Cor 4:7)*
- James is in essence saying, “while we are authors of sin which leads to death, God is the fountain of all things good.”
- *What would it look like if we saw God’s goodness before attempting to understand our trials?*

Acknowledge God’s Immutability

“...coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17b)

- God is unchangeable in his being, perfections, purposes and promises.

“For I the LORD do not change;” (Mal 3:6)

“Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.” (Ps 102:25–27)

- Some manuscripts say “...who does not change like shifting shadows (NIV);” “...with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (KJV);” “...with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (NASB).”
- James is specifically referencing the similarity between the Lord and the sun. While there are lunar eclipses (when the earth’s shadow blocks the sun’s light against the moon), the sun remains the same.
- Another way of looking at this is earthly shadows. Light is distorted due to shadows, but it does not diminish the source of light.
- Thomas Chisholm in 1923 wrote:

“Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

- Basically, James is describing his Lord’s unchangeable nature in this way:
 - “If God gave good gifts, he will continue to give good gifts.”
 - “If God does good things, he will continue to do good things.”

- “If God made a promise, he will keep his promise.”
- But what if God could change...if God could change for the worse, he would be unholy. If he could change for the better, he wouldn't be perfect.
- *What would it look like if we saw God's unchangeable nature before we navigate through trials and temptations?*

Acknowledge His Will

“Of his own will...” (James 1:18a)

- “God's will is the attribute of God where he approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation.” –Wayne Grudem

“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.” (Eph 1:11)

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” (Col 1:16)

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12–13)

- God's will can and does include suffering.
- *“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.” (1 Pe 3:17)*
- *“Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” (1 Pe 4:19)*
- We should view all events in our lives as under subjection to God's will and yield.

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’ — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’” (Jas 4:13–15)

- It was God's free will that offered redemption; not our works, our status or our early start in the church.
- *What would it look like if we saw God's overarching will, before we sought to understand our trials?*

Acknowledge His Omnipotence

“...he brought us forth...” (James 1:18b)

- God's omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will. In short, God has the power to carry out whatever he decides to do!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3–5)

“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? (Je 32:27)

Jeremiah said, “Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.” (Je 32:17)

Gabriel told Mary, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Lk 1:37)

Jesus said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Mt 19:26)

Paul confirmed: “[God] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.” (Eph 3:20)

- During our trials and the fight against temptation, God still has the power to do all he purposes! God’s power does not grow or diminish based on the trials he gives or temptations you encounter!
- God is so powerful that he can even do things he’s never done before like use stones to raise up children to Abraham! (Mt 3:9)
- It is this power that was able to regenerate dead sinners into new creatures who are set apart and declared God’s holy possession.
- *What would it look like if we saw God’s unlimited power before muddling through trials and temptations?*

Acknowledge His Gospel

“...by the word of truth...” (James 1:18c)

- Put simply, the “word of truth” is God’s Gospel—that His son would become the object of wrath so that we might become the object of love!

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Ga 1:3–5)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Co 5:21)”

- James expresses that the tool that God used to pull us out of darkness was the very Gospel that God created.
- The Gospel is the preached word to us that convicts of sin, forgives our sin and places us in right standing with God.
- The Gospel (or good news) is based in truth and we lean upon the Gospel for our salvation, sanctification, future with Christ.
- We owe our entire regeneration to the Lord and take no credit for any of it!
- *What would it look like if we saw God’s Gospel before trying to understand our trials?*

Acknowledge His Bride

“...that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18d)

- The first fruits are always the choicest part or the best pick of humanity.
- It is God who selects the “first fruits”—not us.

“we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2 Th 2:13)

"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:11–12)

- James was speaking to Jewish believers who would understand this reference. As they would have given their "first fruit" to the Lord, Christ would choose them (and us) as His "first fruit" to God.
- Christ's chosen people are the first of those regenerated by the Spirit and hold the promise of "ultimate regeneration."

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now." (Ro 8:19–22)

- What honor to be chosen and called his bride!
- *What would it look like if we acknowledged God's choosing of us before we tried to make sense of trials and temptations?*

Closing Takeaways:

We could summarize James' statement this way: "God is supremely good and cannot change. By God's will and God's power we were raised from the dead. All of this was accomplished by God's Gospel that we would be God's perfect bride. Do not be tricked into thinking anything otherwise!"

1. Whether you are pushing through a trial or fighting a temptation, stop and consider who it is you serve.
2. Wisdom and understanding come from the Lord, so build your understanding of trials and temptations from top down vs bottom up (i.e., acknowledge Christ and who he is first before considering your trial or temptation versus struggling to understanding the trial before seeking God).

Amen!