

James – Life after Faith
James 1:17
“God is Good All the Time”

1. YOU SHOULD BE APPRECIATIVE FOR THE GIFTS IN YOUR LIFE

A. The character of the giver

B. The content of the gift

2. YOU SHOULD BE AMAZED AT THE GRACE ON YOUR LIFE

A. Consider the source

B. Consider the supply

3. YOU SHOULD BE ASSURED BY THE GOD OF YOUR LIFE

A. He never differs

B. He never dims

1. In C.S. Lewis' classic *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, there is a scene where the children hear for the first time about King Aslan the Lion, who is an allegorical figure of the Lord Jesus.

2. After Mr. Beaver explains that Aslan is a Lion, Susan says, "...I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." To this, Mrs. Beaver says, "If there is anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

3. Young Lucy asks, "Then he isn't safe?" Mr. Beaver answers with one of best lines of the book. He says, "'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."ⁱ

4. In James 1:13, Brother James declares that God can never be accused of tempting man to sin. God can never be credited with anything evil.

5. In verse 17, James explains that far from being associated with evil, the God we serve is perpetually good, both in who He is, and in what He does. What we can expect from Him is good.

6. James says, "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*"

7. Looking at this one verse, I want to draw out three applications for our relationship with the God who is good all the time.

8. When we understand the nature of our God, it should necessarily affect how we relate to Him. Notice with me first of all, in light of who God is, and what He has done:

I. YOU SHOULD BE APPRECIATIVE FOR THE GIFTS IN YOUR LIFE

1. I have said before that of all the mythological creatures dreamt up in the imagination, none is as ridiculous as the self-made man. There is no such thing as a self-made man.
2. James reminds us of this when he says in verse 17, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...”*
3. The things you enjoy in life; the blessings that sweeten your existence on this earth, are not the results of your labors. They come from above as gifts from God.
4. James points us to a couple of things about these gifts and their source. Notice these with me. We should be appreciative because of:

A. The character of the giver

1. Though our Bible simply says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift...”*, James actually used two different words for “gift”.
2. The first of these is a word that describes the act of giving, rather than the thing that is given. Literally, James says, “Every good giving” or “Every act of giving that is good...”
3. In other words, before James points us to the gift, he wants us to consider the giver. The gifts are good, but the one who gives them is even more so.
4. It is possible to give a good gift, but to give it in the wrong attitude. You can give something good, but give it grudgingly. You can give something good, but give it with an ulterior motive.
5. However, James reminds us that when God gives to us, we can be certain and grateful that He is giving out of a genuine love for us, and that He gives to us with the highest and holiest of motives.
6. I can’t help but think of how God’s giving is described in Romans 8:32. It says, *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also **freely** give us all things?”*
7. Or how Jesus describes the giving of God in Luke 12:32. He said, *“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s **good pleasure** to give you the kingdom.”*
8. God is good not only because of what He gives, but also because of the way He gives. We can be thankful for the gifts in our life because of the character of the giver, but also because of:

B. The content of the gift

1. Notice again what James says in verse 17. He says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...”* The second time we see that word “gift” it is translated from a word that describes the thing given.
2. Notice the James refers to it as “every perfect gift”. The word translated “perfect” has its root in the idea of fulfilling a purpose.
3. In other words, the gifts that God gives us are perfect for fulfilling the purposes of our lives. They are the perfect gifts for us.
4. Have you every gotten a gift from someone and thought, “What I am going to do with this,” or “Why did they give *this* to me?”
5. I found an interesting website this week. It is www.badgiftemporium.com. The website claims to be the place “where bad gifts get a second chance.” On the site, you can post a bad gift that you have received, or you can buy someone else’s bad gift, if you should want it.
6. What James is telling us in verse 17 is that God does not give bad gifts. He gives perfect gifts. In fact, every good gift and every perfect gift in your life has been given to you by God.
7. In Psalm 68:19, David said, *“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.”* Psalm 103:2 says, *“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:”*
8. When you consider all the blessed gifts you enjoy in your life, you should be appreciative to the Lord for each and every one of them.
9. Let me draw a second application from this verse. When you think of God’s goodness, not only should you be *appreciative for the gifts in your life*, but I would say also that:

II. YOU SHOULD BE AMAZED AT THE GRACE ON YOUR LIFE

1. Though James does not use the word in this verse, what he is describing is grace. The good and perfect gifts that come down to us from God, ride on the wings of His grace.
2. Look at that phrase, *“...cometh down from the Father of lights...”* As I meditated this week on those words, they spoke to me of the grace God shows us when He gives us good things.
3. Looking at this phrase, notice with me a couple of things about the amazing grace that God showers on our lives. First of all, this grace is amazing when you:

A. Consider the source

1. Look at the title James uses for God. He calls Him, *“the Father of lights”*. The “lights” in this verse refers to the lights of the heavens. This is the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets.
2. James says that God is the one who fathered these lights. They are His creation.
3. Our planet orbits in the middle of a massive galaxy known as the Milky Way. From our planet, we can see a large, bright sun that lights the day, and reflects light off of the moon at night. That sun is 109 times bigger than our planet.
4. In our galaxy alone, there are million such suns that are even brighter than ours. Our galaxy is so vast that if you could travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), it would still take you about 100,000 years to cross our galaxy.
5. And do you realize that our vast galaxy is just one galaxy among the millions that are dotted across the universe. And the creating force of each one of those vast galaxies is none other than the very God who sends down good gifts into your little life.
6. Truly, we should say with the Psalmist, *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him (Ps. 8:4)?”*
7. When you consider the fact that the God of the galaxies knows your name, and blesses your life, and even sent His Son Jesus on your behalf, you should be amazed at that kind of grace.
8. Notice something else about this amazing grace. Notice not only that it is amazing when you consider the source, but it is also amazing when you:

B. Consider the supply

1. Look again at our text, and notice that phrase, *“...cometh down...”* James says that every good and perfect gift is “coming down” from the God of the galaxies.
2. The phrase “cometh down” is translated from one word, and it is a word that is in the continuous present tense. In other words, it is an action that has been happening, and is still presently happening.
3. Spiros Zodhiates says this word indicates that, “God never ceases, not for a single moment, to shower His blessings upon us.”ⁱⁱⁱ

4. There has not been a single second of your life that the God of the universe has not had His hand open pouring down a continuous stream of gifts into your life.
5. While I preach this sermon, your heart will beat some 2,100 times, and each one of those beats is a gift from the God who sustains all life.
6. Today, your lungs will breathe in some 11,000 liters of air, and every gram of it will be a gift from the God who created your lungs and the air you breathe.
7. When you pause to consider just a few of the millions of good and perfect gifts that God is showering upon you at this very moment, it is nothing short of amazing, and it is all an act of sovereign grace.
8. Though he doesn't use the word, James is talking about grace, and no matter how you look at it, the grace of God toward us is amazing.
9. Notice a third application we draw from this text. When you think of the perpetual goodness of God, not only should you *be appreciative for the gifts in your life*, and *be amazed at the grace on your life*, but I would say also that:

III. YOU SHOULD BE ASSURED BY THE GOD OF YOUR LIFE

1. James packs another theological truth into an already crowded verse when he says of the Father, “...*with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*”
2. With this final phrase, James assures our hearts that the God who has graciously blessed us in the past will continue to do so in the future because of the consistency and constancy of His nature.
3. You and I are prone to change, and inclined toward inconsistency. But the good news is that the assurance of our salvation and the hope of our future does not rest with our steadiness, but with the absolute steadfastness of our God.
4. Notice how James describes our Lord. He says first of all that:

A. He never differs

1. In verse 17, James says that with God there is no “variableness”. The word translated “variableness” is only found in the New Testament here.
2. One ancient writer used this word to describe the alternating stones of the old cobblestone streets.ⁱⁱⁱ It is a word that means “to vary”.
3. What James is talking about is what the theologians call the immutability of God. That is, He never differs or varies. He is always the same.

4. The world has changed drastically since James wrote these words before us. James, no doubt, had only a candle and quill as he penned these words.
5. We have electrical lighting and laptops. Yet, the God about whom I preach is the same God who inspired James as He wrote.
6. James penned a letter that took weeks or even months to reach its destination. I could email the epistle of James to someone on the other side of the globe in a matter of seconds.
7. Yes, much as changed since James penned these words; but the God about whom He wrote them has never changed. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.
8. That is why Vance Havner said, “The Old-Time Religion’ is a misnomer for it is not merely old-time, but new-time, any-time, all-the-time.”
9. James reminds us that we can rest our hopes on the God who is old-time, new-time, any-time, and all-the-time.
10. Notice something else about the assurance we draw from an immutable God. James tells us not only that He never differs, but also that:

B. He never dims

1. Look again at that closing phrase. James says that with our Father, there is no “...*variableness, neither shadow of turning.*”
2. That phrase “shadow of turning” seems to relate to the heavenly lights that James mentions in this verse.
3. In the original language, James says, “neither a shadow caused by turning.” As the stars of the heavens move across our sky, they cast shadows on the ground as their light changes positions.
4. Eventually, all they produce is a shadow, and their light is not directly seen at all. By their shifting and movement they have dimmed, from our perspective.
5. Because God never changes or moves, His light is as bright as it has ever been. It completely dispels darkness.
6. As John put it, “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all* (I John 1:5).”

7. Do you realize the significance of what James is saying to us? The God whose glory shines forth in the pages of Scripture has not lost one molecule of His power and authority.

8. The Jesus who conquered the enemy of sin and took death by the throat as He rose from the grave, is no less the King of kings today than He was when ascended back to heaven.

*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^{iv}*

9. While the world shifts and shakes around us, we can nonetheless be assured by the fact that our God never differs or dims. He is always the same.

1. James has been careful to remind us that evil temptations do not come from God. In doing so, he has pointed us to the fact that our God is good all the time.

2. By His grace He has given us every good and perfect gift. We can look to Him at all times, and be assured that He is forever good.

3. 2,000 years ago, the God who only gives good gifts gave His greatest gift in the person of Jesus Christ.

4. As James reminds us that our God is good all the time, Jesus reminds us of just how good He is!

5. It is when you look to Jesus that you fully understand why you should be appreciative for the gifts in your life, amazed at the grace on your life, and assured by the God of your life.

ⁱ Lewis, C.S., The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, (Harper Trophy, New York, 1994), p. 80

ⁱⁱ Zodiates, Spiros, Faith, Love, Hope, (AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, 1985), p. 82

ⁱⁱⁱ See Robertson's Word Pictures

^{iv} Chisholm, Thomas O., "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"