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# The Goodness of God

## JAMES 1:16-18

### Introduction

1. There is a statement which I heard a few years ago about the goodness of God.
2. It goes like this: "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good."
3. Perhaps, you also have heard these words.
4. Let me ask you, do these words voice your sentiments about God, or are there times when you find yourself questioning the goodness of God.
5. Is it possible that you have challenged the truthfulness of these words when ...
  - a. Tragedy occurs in your life or the life of someone you love.
  - b. You are suddenly let go from a job you needed to support your family.
  - c. You find yourself in the midst of a divorce.
6. Have you ever, in the midst of such circumstances, asked the question, "How can a loving God allow this to happen?" and then questioned the goodness of God.
7. Such moments may come and go in our lives as Christians, but if we allow them to linger, they have the potential to destroy us spiritually.
8. The letter in our New Testaments written by James, the half-brother of our Lord was written to those Christians who were forced to leave Jerusalem in the early days of the church because of the persecution which arose following the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:59, 8:1).
9. These Christians were now experiencing ongoing persecution at the hands of fellow Jews.

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10. Twice in the early part of his letter, James encourages those Christians who

were suffering “trials.”

- a. “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (James 1:2-3, NASB95).
  - b. “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12, NASB95).
10. The word translated as “trial” in our English Bibles can also be translated as “temptation.”
  11. As a result of what these Christians were experiencing, not only were they saying, “God is tempting me” (v. 13), but they were taking it one step further by claiming “God is not good.”
  12. This prompted James to explain to them the nature of temptation and sin in verses 14-15.
  13. Following this, he cautioned them, “Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren” (James 1:16, NASB95).
  14. James then began to write of God’s goodness and what He did as a result.
  15. It is to these two things that I want to draw your minds tonight.

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## I. The Giver

### A. ALL GOODNESS COMES FROM GOD

“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above . . .” (James 1:17a, NASB95).

1. In this opening statement, James emphasizes two things:
  - a. The *action* of giving is good.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

“For God so loved the world that He gave . . .” (John 3:16).

b. All His *gifts* are “good” and “perfect.”

1) He “gives life to all things” (1 Timothy 6:13, NASB95).

2) He “generously” gives “wisdom” to all who ask of Him (James 1:5).

2. God’s giving by its very nature is good.

3. The devil, on the other hand, gives with one purpose in mind: to ultimately “steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10).

4. For this reason, nothing evil can possibly come from above.

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### B. THE NATURE OF THE GIVER

“. . . coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17b, NASB95).

1. He is “the Father of lights”

“Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?” (Job 38:28, NASB95)

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a. The Originator of lights

1) He is the creator of the sun, moon and stars (cf. Isaiah 40:26).

“Lift up your eyes on high  
And see who has created these stars,  
The One who leads forth their host by number,  
He calls them all by name;  
Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power,  
Not one of them is missing.”

(Isaiah 40:26, NASB95)

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- 2) He ordered the different constellations and set in place the physical laws which govern their courses (Job 38:31-33).

“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,  
Or loose the cords of Orion?  
Can you lead forth a constellation in its season,  
And guide the Bear with her satellites?  
Do you know the ordinances of the heavens,  
Or fix their rule over the earth? ”

**(Job 38:31–33, NASB95)**

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- b. The Originator of light
  - 1) This speaks to His moral goodness.
  - 2) The apostle John wrote, “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5, NASB95).
  - 3) It was the apostle Paul who told Timothy that God “dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 6:16).

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2. He is unchanging.

“... with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17c, NASB95).

  - a. Each day we are constantly made aware of the shifting shadows.
    - 1) In the morning, as we stand outside, our bodies and everything else of any height casts a shadow to the west.
    - 2) At noontime we hardly see any shadow at all.
    - 3) In the evening hours, the shadows we see stretch to the east.
  - b. We live in the midst of constant change:
    - 1) Our bodies change as we age.

- 2) Technology is constantly changing the world in which we live.
  - 3) Public policy changes almost daily.
- c. And yet, our God does not change (Malachi 3:6).
- “I the Lord, do not change . . .” (Malachi 3:6, NASB95).
- d. The good news for those of us who are Christians, both now and throughout all eternity is that our God is unchangeably and eternally good — He is as good today as He ever was or ever will be.

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## **II. The Gift**

### **A. ORIGINATES IN THE MIND OF A GOOD GOD**

“In the exercise of His will . . .” (James 1:18a, NASB95).

1. James tells us that it was “the exercise of His will.”
  - a. How many things have happened in your life today because you exercised your will?
  - b. The ultimate gift which God gives to us comes as a result of the exercising of His will.
2. The result of God’s goodness is that He chose to bring James’ readers and those of us who are Christians today to Himself (cf. Ephesians 1:4-5).

“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,” (Ephesians 1:4–5, NASB95)

3. Everything in salvation is the result of God’s goodness.
4. We are His people because of the grace of God which is rooted in His goodness.

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**B. THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH IT IS GIVEN**

“ . . . He brought us forth by the word of truth . . . ” (James 1:18b, NASB95).

1. This “word of truth,” which is also called “the gospel,” is the instrument through which God brings people to life.
2. In Ephesians 1:13, the apostle Paul tells the Christians in Ephesus that the result of their “listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” and believing that message was that they “were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”
3. He told the Colossians in 1:5, that it was “in the word of truth, the gospel” that they had previously heard of “the hope laid up for [them] in heaven.”
4. Three verses beyond this verse here in James, he tells us that this same word, when “implanted” in our hearts, is able “to save [our] souls” (James 1:21).
5. Once again, we see the goodness of God, not only in the fact that He chose to save us, but also that He gave us His Word to show us the way.

**Slide 10a****C. THE END RESULT: GOOD**

“ . . . so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures ” (James 1:18c, NASB95).

1. “Firstfruits” is not a term with which we tend to be familiar.
2. It is taken from agriculture and referred to the first produce from the grape vine, the olive tree, the wheat field, the cattle or the sheep.
3. Here, as James uses it, the reference is to these first Jewish Christians.
4. They were the beginning of a harvest which has continued for almost 2,000 years.
5. God’s goodness continues even today, as many of us are the recipients of the salvation which God has brought to us through His Son.

## Conclusion

1. As we conclude tonight, let's return to the words with which James began our text: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."
2. Good only comes from God.
3. Our gift giver is the Father of all creation.
4. His goodness will never change.
5. We experience it not only in our salvation, but in some form or another every day of our lives.

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6. My question for you is this: Will you choose to enjoy God's goodness today?