

Jas07 – God Is Good James 1:16-18

Pastor Dave Shepardson Calvary Chapel Nuevo / www.wordbymail.com

Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “God Is Good.” James chapter 1 verses 16 through 18. In this message we come to the end of our first major section of James which has been all about our trials and temptations. We’ve been in it six messages, not including the introduction message. This first section on trials and temptations has been like an incredible series of building blocks, like a pyramid. James has laid down layer after layer of truths regarding our trials and temptations and this message James comes to the pinnacle of the “truth” pyramid.

James has been building on each of the truths in these past five messages to culminate in a greater understanding of God, a truer understanding of God. So, this message we get to the grand summary of this little “mini-series” on trials. James want to make the highest point on this subject perfectly clear – *God IS Good!* It’s the ultimate pinnacle truth about our trials, our temptations and our difficulties.

Here’s why. It’s because we, as sin natured humans, we have a tendency when things go bad to start questioning God, to begin to doubt God. All of us. We all do, it’s our nature to some extent. We have moments of questioning God, like, at the very least, “Really God? You’re kidding me, right?” And at the very most we shake a finger, and then a fist and then an arm at God when things start going bad. The good news is, God understands. He understands the frailty of man. And he can handle you emotional, volatile, ungodly, unbelieving responses to a point. He understands.

Proverbs says *a righteous man stumbles seven times, but gets up*. (Proverbs 24:16).

If you read through the Psalms, you will see that the Psalmists had moments of doubt and difficulty when they were in tough times. King David, of course, man when everyone was trying to kill him under Saul. Here’s the problem. If that doubting and questioning which is actually common to the frailty of man, if that takes root in your heart, it leads to disbelief. It can lead to you falling away from God. Not questioning God while clinging to him, but questioning God while turning from him. Walking away from him. That’s the risk. And that’s what James has been dealing with since verse 2.

So, to cap it off today, James wants us to get one thing perfectly clearly, unshakably, solidly in our minds. That is that God is good, all the time! And all good things come from God. All good things come from God. And God is good all the time.

What we truly believe, what's really at the core of our being, impacts how we respond to God. It impacts how we live with God. It impacts how we walk with God. It impacts whether we obey him or not. And the more we question him, the more we doubt him, the more we disobey, the more we reject, the more we do what we want instead of what he wants. The more we believe in him, the more we believe he is good, the more we believe everything good comes from him, the more we put our faith in him., the more we put our trust in him, the more we throw ourselves into his arms. That's what James wants to do today. He wants to give you a rock solid foundational belief in the absolute unchanging goodness of God. And if you have that rock solid, unchanging, foundational belief in the goodness of God, it will impact how you feel and how you respond in the trials and temptations and the difficulties of this life.

Let's pray. *Lord Jesus, please, just pour out your Spirit on us. Strengthen us in the trials that we are in right now. Strengthen us for the trials that are coming that we don't even know about yet. Be the answer for us before we even know the question. Strengthen us, shore us up, Lord. Put the pillars of absolute faith in our lives, that we would have an unwavering faith in your unchangeable goodness. Lord, please do that for us today. In your own name we pray, amen.*

First verse, verse 16 of James 1, is another hinge verse. Last week we had a hinge verse, or a transitional verse that got us into a three verse section. Today we have a transitional verse, a hinge verse, which gets us into a three verse section. Here's a cool thing about James. The grammatical structure of last message's three verses and this message's three verses are parallel. The structure in its writing is identical. It's just these three verses are the flip side of our last message's three verses. (If you didn't hear last message you may want to grab that from wordbymail.) Last week, let me summarize for you, James said don't be deceived about where temptations come from. They come from your own evil desires. Your own fleshly desires.

This message James says don't be deceived about where everything that's good comes from. So last message don't be deceive by where your temptations come from, this message don't be deceived about where everything good comes from. It's like the Holy Spirit has a plan. So here we go, James 1:16 and 17, because 16 is the hinge verse going into the subject.

James 1:16-17 together (ESV)

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

17 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.

Again, our verses last message said our temptations can only be traced back to our own desires, our own sin nature, to our own fleshly desires. This message, our verses make it clear that every good and perfect gift can only be traced back to one source. God. Everything good. Every good and perfect gift can only be traced back to one source. God. Our Heavenly Father. Every single one. Look again in verse 17.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights . . .

James is saying, listen, all things that are good, come from God. He's talking to Christians, that's generally accepted. He's speaking to Jewish Christians early in the movement who are under severe persecution and he is saying, don't be mistaken, your temptation to sin comes from yourself, everything good comes from God. Let's get the source clear right up front.

Most literal translation here is ***All good giving and every perfect gift is from above.***

Let me just let you struggle with this for a minute, because I did. I had to kind of struggle with this, so struggle with it for me for a minute. Here it is; all goodness comes from God. There is not one thing that is truly good, that does not have its source in our Heavenly Father the creator God. If you want to take a minute to think about it, try it. There's not one thing that's actually, truly good that does not have its source in God. *God is good all the time and all good things come from God.* This is a radical statement and it will pulverize our doubting and questioning God if we will believe it. If we truly believe God is at work for good in our life all the time and that everything truly good comes from God, if you truly believe that it will impact how you view your circumstances. It will change how you view your circumstances. If you don't believe that, you will always question God. You will always have a tendency to deny him and doubt him. It has to do with your faith.

The word "perfect" here in verse 17 ***Every good gift and every PERFECT GIFT is from God,*** that word "perfect," is correctly defined as what we would describe as perfect when it's used for God. When it's used for God it's perfect as we would define it as perfect. However, the same Greek word is also translated, "mature." It's also translated "complete." And it's also translated as "full." And so when it applies to us, or from our perspective we can say, that every truly mature gift, every truly complete gift, every truly full gift comes down from above, from the Father of Lights, our Heavenly Father.

Here's the bad news. God is not giving us what *we think* is good. God is giving us what is *truly* good. God is not giving us what we want. God is giving us what is truly, genuinely,

fully, maturely, perfectly eternally good. Because “Father knows best.” That’s why. It’s really important for us to see that because often what we call good and what we pray for to God and try to convince him is good is actually the fleshly desires of our own sin nature. God, I should have this. I should be this. This should be going this way. God, this is what’s good; this is what you should be giving me. And God’s going, “Uhh, no! What I’m giving you is what’s truly good. What I am giving you is fully good, maturely good. Eternally good. “

Here’s the question. If God is not at work for our temporal good, if he is only at work for our full, perfect, mature, eternal good, here’s a question. *Is God’s good more good than your good?* If God’s good is eternally better than your good, if God’s good is better than your good, who’s good do you want? Will you say that the next time the fire is turned up? Will you say that next time you’re in a situation between a rock and a hard place and you don’t know what to do? Will you cry out to God and say, “God, your good is more good than my good. And I want your good. I trust you. All good things come from you. You are only good. I want your good, not my own.”

The best way I can illustrate this is with the parent of a two year old. I have daughters that have had two year olds and my son has an almost two year old, and I had two years olds (back when TV was only black and white. Okay, no, I’m not that old.) Parent of a two year old do you know that sometimes there’s a difference between what your two year old thinks is good, and what you as a loving parent thinks is good? Is there a discrepancy between a two year old’s version of good and a loving parent’s version of good? Say “yes.”

So next time you’re under pressure and you’re in the tribulation say “God, I’m just like a two year old. I just want to be happy. I want my way. I want what I want. But God I know that you’re my loving parent. I know that you know what’s best. And so though my two year old doesn’t understand, I understand. And I want to surrender to what you know is best.”

Whose idea of good is God giving? God is good all the time. But he is giving his all knowing, omniscient, eternal version of good. Not your two year old, self-focused, demanding version of good. Does it make us say, “Aww man, I’m not going to get what I want?” No it makes us say “I trust you. I trust you. I realize I’m just like a demanding two year old, and I’m sorry. I surrender my self-focused demanding will and I trust that you’re bringing something good out of this trial. Because you’re good all the time. And because all good comes from you I trust you more than my own feelings, more than my own opinions, more than my own fleshly self-centered desires. I trust you God. I trust

you, I trust you. I won't try to convince you that what I want is good. Instead, I'll surrender and trust that what is good you are going to give me."

This is life changing. That's why it's the pinnacle of the truth pyramid about trials. "I won't try to convince you God that what I think is good is good, instead I will surrender to you knowing that you are good all the time, that you work for good in my life all the time, and that all things good come from you. I'll actually trust *you*."

It's a big deal. It's a big deal for Christians. James is writing to Christians. And if you haven't surrendered your life to Jesus Christ today, you're getting the truth. Come to God. Come to Christ. Surrender your life to him and say, "Lord. Apparently since my life is a wreck, apparently I'm not so good at determining what's so good for myself. I'm going to surrender to you and I'm going to trust you to bring good into my life."

The reason I "hammer" that is because it has to be a foundational belief. It has to be the top layer of this truth pyramid, especially in the midst of our trials. Here's something that's important to know. Bad things happen to God's children. I wish it weren't true. There's a day when it's not going to be true. There's a day coming when nothing bad will occur to God's children. Is that day today? It's not. God is good, but things bad happen to God's children

Why? What are the sources?

- #1) The general "fallenness" of the world. The fact that we live in a sinful, fallen world.
- #2) Our flesh. Which I think, personally, accounts for eighty percent of all bad that comes into our life. That's what James dealt with last message. Don't blame God, man. That's the fleshly, sinful desires that brought on the consequences of sin in your life. Accept responsibility.
- #3) The world system and its tempting of us. We dealt with that last message.
- #4) We have a spiritual enemy that's at work, watching us, looking for our spiritual weaknesses and then setting up "lures", again as we talked last message, to get us into bad situations.
- #5) And again, sometimes it's just the rain falling on the just and the unjust. It's a fallen world we live in.

I want you to know today and James wants you to know, in the midst of all the bad, God is good. In the midst of all the bad, God is good, all the time. In the midst of all the bad, God is at work in your life. We *must trust him*. We must look for him. WE must join him in what he's doing. We must crucify our own desire of what we think is good and

surrender to God's true, eternal, perfect goodness. It's a battle, is it not? It takes crucifying the flesh every day.

Here's why this is true. God is intrinsically good. He is intrinsically good. It's a comment of his character; it's an attribute of God. He is intrinsically, comprehensibly, totally, forever, unchangingly good. God *cannot be evil*. We dealt with this last message. James is giving us the flip side. What he said negatively last message he is saying positively this message. God is good intrinsically, he cannot change. He cannot change his character. If we believe that in the midst of our trials it will impact how we respond. It will give us peace that passes understanding, it will give us confidence, it will give us caution, it will cause us to cry out to God for his wisdom, if we will believe that God is good, all the time and that all good things come from God.

God is good, all the time. In the midst of your bad situation, God is good. And all good things, in the midst of your bad situation, all good things come from God. God is intrinsically, comprehensibly, perfectly, completely good all the time. And he is at work in your life in the midst of a trial.

I know I am repeating myself but it's because honestly, it's a bit rare. And I'm not being hard on you, but it is somewhat rare to meet a Christian in the midst of a trial who exhibits this level of faith. Because it is common for us to have some doubts and questions. And that's why I am encouraging you to shore up your faith, to turn these things over to God.

Let's look at James 1:17 again.

James 1:17 says (ESV)

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights . . .

When James says God is "The Father of Lights" he is referring to the heavenly lights, the stars, planets, galaxies. Everything you see in the heavens.

Let's look at this verse in the NLT.

James 1:17 (NLT)

17 Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens . . .

If you have given your life to Jesus Christ today, your heavenly father who sends every good and perfect gift into your life is also the father of *every light* in the heavens. This

has to do with whether God is big enough and powerful enough to bring good and perfect gifts into your life, even in the midst of your trials. He created every single star and planet in every galaxy in this immeasurable, expanding universe. In 2003 scientists estimated 70 sextillion stars. In 2010 they adjusted that figure to 300 sextillion stars. If you're counting, that 300 with 21 zeros behind it. And your heavenly father who brings only good and perfect gifts into your life he created every one of those 300 sextillion stars. He determined each one's brightness and size. He set the laws of the universe in order to keep them there and then he set them in constellations for fun. Isn't it safe to say that God is capable of bringing good and perfect gifts into your life? It just doesn't seem like that big a challenge for him does it?

If that is who your heavenly father is, and he's bringing only good and perfect gifts into your life, can you trust him? Even in your trials? Can you count on him? Even in your trials? Is he big enough to make it happen?

James wants to make sure we are very clear on the goodness of God and on the guaranty of that goodness. And so, at the end of verse 17, to give us more assurance that God will bring his goodness into our lives this is a statement about God's character (or his attributes.)

James 1:17 (ESV)

17 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.

In the NLT - the end of James 1:17

... He never changes or casts a shifting shadow

This is a continuation of the example of the heavenly lights God created them all, but he doesn't change like they do. God's goodness is like the brightest sun if it was stuck at straight up noon. God's goodness never casts a shadow from changing or moving. It is perfectly constant.

God can never change. He can never cast a shifting shadow. There can never be any variation in our God. This is God's immutability (it means unchangeable.) Our heavenly father is unchanging.

Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes Psalm 102.

Hebrews 1:10-12 (ESV)

10 And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;

*11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment,
12 like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”*

Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Our God does not change. He does not change from the inside and he cannot be changed from the outside. Is that good for you and me? Is it good that the same God who died for our sins in Jesus Christ, the same God who won our victory over sin and death, the same God who adopted us into his family... is it good that *that God* never changes? It is very good!!!

Why? Because we do change, don't we. Sometimes we go from being idiots to being bigger idiots. Sometimes we go from some measure of Godliness to no measure of Godliness. But does God's love for us change when we change? Does God's work to bring only good into our lives change when we change? God's love for us cannot change and his work to bring good into our lives cannot change. Why? Because he is unchangeable!

Our heavenly father from whom all good and perfect gifts come

Is eternally omnipotent (Jer 32:17)

He is rich in mercy and grace (Eph 2:4, 7)

He is faithful through all generations (Psa 119:90)

His steadfast love endures forever (Psa 118:29)

God is good all the time and all good things come from God.

That is the pinnacle of the pyramid James is building. That is the final layer of truth we must hold on to when we find ourselves in trials and temptations.

James continues his proof of God's unmerited and unchanging grace toward us by saying next, "Listen, he saved you, didn't he? And not only did he save you, but he has made you a kind of "firstfruits" of his creation." That is what James 1:18 says.

James 1:18 (ESV)

18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Here is a truth critical for us to understand. When God saved you, you were helpless, hopeless and lost in your sin. In fact, God saw you as already dead in your sin. You were

rightfully headed to God's judgment and there was nothing you could do about it on your own. And at that point, God, of his own will, "brought you forth." He gave you new birth in Jesus Christ. Not of your work. Not of your deserving. But of his own will. He saved you. He gave you new life when you were already lost and dead in sin. That is the ultimate "good and perfect gift" that has come down from your father in heaven. And I believe James is trying to get across the same thought Paul expresses in Romans 8:32.

Romans 8:32 (ESV)

32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Your heavenly father who has created all things and is only good, gave up his own son, Jesus Christ, so that you and I could be given new life when we were dead in our sins.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life

This is the God from whom all that is good comes. You can trust him. He has already given you everything.

And James 1:18 says God has ***Brought You Forth - BY the Word of Truth***. This is a reference to the gospel message (the Good News.) You were born again to this new life and into God's family by the gospel message, the good news of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:13 says:

Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Not only has God given you new life by giving Jesus Christ to die in your place, which is the best gift of all the good and perfect gifts, not only has he given you new life in Christ but he has sealed you with the promised Holy Spirit. The word "sealed" means *a sign of authentic ownership*. God has saved you. He's given you new life in Jesus Christ and he has sealed you as his own with the Holy Spirit. If you can grasp the eternal goodness of those gifts, how can you ever doubt God's goodness in the midst of your trials and difficulties of this temporal world?

And finally James 1:18 says **God** has **made** us ***a kind of firstfruits of his creatures***

The firstfruits is a foretaste, a down payment, a representative portion of a harvest. Listen carefully; God had made you a representative portion of his harvest of goodness. In God's goodness of saving you and redeeming you, he has made you a representative portion of his goodness. You represent (in down payment fashion) the goodness of God for all to see as God continues to save people and bring full redemption to all of his creation. That is a big deal. That is who you are to God and that is why you can trust him to bring good and perfect gifts into your life right in the midst of your trials.

Well, this is where the full teaching of joy in the midst of trials finally comes to an end for James. This is the pinnacle, the top layer in the truth pyramid. *God is good all the time and all good things come from God.*

The Holy Spirit, through James, wants you to know God is with you in your trial and God is at work in your trial. God is using your trial to refine and mature you. But you need his wisdom to see it. So ask him for it in faith. Boast in what God is doing in your life and patiently endure the tribulations of this life.

Don't ever blame God for your temptation to sin and know, always know, forever know God is raining down truly good and perfect gifts into your life. All that is good comes from God and there is no variation or changing in him. And so, as James 1:2 says

James 1:2 (ESV)

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

Because at the top of the truth pyramid is this truth: God is good all the time and all good things come from God.

Let's pray. *Lord please, please, please, take us out of our circumstances, out of the "temporalness," the fleetingness of our difficulties, Lord. Draw us up God to meet you. Set our eyes beyond the horizon, and give us the strength to follow you. If you've never committed your life to Christ, do it now. You can say, "God, I'm not sure what he is talking about. But I know I need you. I need you to come into my life, I need to be changed. I repent of my sin, Lord. Save me. Be at work in my life for good, Lord and give me the power of your Spirit to follow you every day. In Jesus' name, amen.*

