

Every Good and Perfect Gift – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – steadfastness of faith, even within our own sin, is a good and perfect gift of God
2. aim – to cause us to recognize the sovereign hand of God over us in his consistent dealings with us
3. passage – James 1:12-18

b. outline

1. The Need for Perseverance (James 1:12)
2. The Need for Honesty (James 1:13-15)
3. The Need for Perfect Gifts (James 1:16-18)

c. opening

1. the title: *Every Good and Perfect Gift*
 - a. **question:** that title was never referenced in the previous two sermons – why not?
 - b. **answer:** because it is only now *here* that the title will make sense over these three sermons
 1. **i.e.** the previous two sermons *alluded* to the topic here, so now I can wrap them together

III. The Need for Perfect Gifts (James 1:16-18)

Content

a. do not be deceived (v. 16)

1. **question:** deceived by *what?* (**always important to ask such questions**)
 - a. immediate (**v. 15**): deceived by *my own flesh* – do not be deceived by the *incessant* pressure of the flesh to “need” – the *lie* of our concupiscence that we must “have” this or that
 1. **i.e.** we are to exercise the fruit of the Spirit to *self-control* (**Romans 6:14**)
 - b. larger (**vv. 13-15**): deceived as to the *reality of a struggle to sin* – do not be deceived in your sin because “God made me this way” – the *lie* of sin being *trivial*
 1. **i.e.** contrasting the holiness of God against our propensities as an *incentive* to pursue holiness
 - c. overall (**vv. 12-15, or 2-15**): deceived into *missing the purpose* of our tests of faith – the *lie* of the Christian life as easy or simple or just a *perfunctory* (superficial) commitment to “religion”
 1. **i.e.** we are to remain steadfast under trial because there is a *purpose* of God in them
 2. **i.e.** going back to **v. 2**: connecting “*my beloved brothers*” to “*brothers*” in the Dispersion
 - a. not just men, but a genderless construct of “brethren” or “siblings” around a common faith
 - b. but, not those loved by James (*per se*; he did not *know [most of] them personally*)
 - c. rather, those loved by God = the trials believers experience are a part of the *love of God* for his own – it is out of the *love [commitment] of God for his own* that we face what we do
 1. **contra:** that love is just an emotional connection – **e.g.** Jesus will make your life “easy”
 3. **IOW:** God loves you just as you are, but God loves you *too much* to *leave you where you are*
 - a. the deception is to “dismiss” the idea of trials and testings as “unnecessary” to the Christian life – to fail to see the *value* (joy!) in them as a part of God’s ***genuine love*** (**proved below**)

b. every good gift and every perfect gift (v. 17)

1. “*gift*” = (actually) two different original words with *slightly* different meanings (although both nouns)
 - a. the first: *dosis* = the act of giving; not the *action* of giving, but the concept of giving something
 - b. the second: *dōrēma* = a gift (literally); what is given in an act of giving
 - c. **i.e.** the *good* or *generous* act of God in which he gives a *perfect* or *complete* gift
 - d. **question:** *what* gift; *what is* the gift? (**again, need to ask**)
 1. possibly (in contrast to **v. 13**): everything *good* that God gives to his people – grace, mercy, forgiveness, relationship, compassion (**re: GIFF**), love (**see v. 16**)
 - a. **i.e.** everything that God *restores in us* (**see Genesis 1** and “*good*”) that was lost in the Fall
 2. probably (in context): the *specific* reality of *testings of faith*, the struggles that God has ordained “*from above*” that his “*beloved*” are to endure as a *part of his overarching plan in the world*
 - a. because it has been the subject of the entire chapter
 - b. because, continuing in **v. 19**, James will give some *practical* suggestions on how to live this struggle (**i.e.** being doers of the Word, not just hearers)
 - e. **thus, our struggles of faith are a gift from God ...**

2. “the Father of lights” = the nature of God whereby he is the *source* of all knowledge and truth
 - a. “light” (*photon*) = lit. light; sym: a contrast with darkness (**Luke 1:79**); truth and falsity (**Luke 12:3**), knowledge and ignorance (**Luke 8:17**), sight and blindness (**Luke 11:34**), good and evil
 1. the fullest of revelation (particularly in Christ; **John 1:4**) – the exhaustive knowledge of God, his omniscience; God knows all that can be known – God as the *source* of all knowledge
 2. so, the good and perfect gifts come down from the One who knows and understands all things
 1. in our struggles, we cannot see the full picture of what is happening and what is intended
 2. but God knows – he understands *what* is happening and *why* it is happening
 - c. **thus, our struggles of faith are a gift from God out of his exhaustive knowledge of what is best for us (out of his love for us) ...**
 1. we question *why* we must struggle with persecution or pain or sin, but God knows the *inestimable value* of these things to us *in the larger scheme of his purposes* ...
 3. “no shadow due to change” (or “no shadow of turning”) – the unchanging nature of God
 - a. **c.f.** stanza 1 of *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* – there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not; thy compassions they fail not; as though hast been thou forever wilt be ...
 1. “no shadow of turning” = either
 - a. the changing of a shadow cast by an object that is turning or moving, or (**more likely**) ...
 - b. the changing of a shadow cast because of an *external* light source that moves
 2. **i.e.** because God is the “Father of lights” (**i.e.** the *source* of all knowledge in himself), the idea is probably that there is nothing *outside* of God that can cause any “visible” change in him
 - b. **immutability:** the nature of God whereby he is *unchanged*, *unchanging*, and *unchangeable*, by anything within himself *or by any external force*; his absolute consistency
 1. his *nature* is unchangeable – God is self-existent, self-determining, self-sufficient
 - a. he requires nothing outside of himself to exist or continue to be – his holiness, majesty, beauty, glory, eternity, etc. are unchanged by anything he has created (**i.e.** as Yahweh)
 2. his *knowledge* is unchangeable – God is omniscient and his knowledge is perfect
 - a. he learns nothing from the created order, for he knows all that is (**contra** synergism)
 3. his *purpose* is unchangeable – God has decreed all that will be in his creation
 - a. he has *ordained* all that will come to pass upon the earth, *even through the free decisions of his free creatures* – his decree is *absolute* and *unchanging* because it is based on his unchanging nature of holiness and his unchanging knowledge of all things
 - c. **thus, our struggles of faith are a gift from an immutable God who has purposed all that will come to pass ...**
 1. our **assurance** in our struggles is knowing that God **will never change his mind** – all whom he has chosen to set his love upon *will* be drawn from the world, *will* be conformed to the image of his Son, and *will* appear in his presence holy and perfect
 - a. in our persecution, we are assured because Christ was persecuted *according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God* (**Acts 2:23**); in our common ailments, we are assured because we are told that *nothing can separate us from the love [commitment] of God in Christ Jesus* (**Rom. 8:39**); in our sin, we are assured because we know that *all the Father gives to Christ will come to him and he will never cast them out* (**John 6:37**)
- c. **the firstfruits of his creatures (v. 18)**
 1. **note:** this verse is the conclusion of **vv. 2-17** – it makes the *final* point of the section ...
 2. “of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth” = believers (us) are elect and drawn from the world (brought us forth) through the ordained means of grace (the word of truth) because God has purposed to do so (of his own will) – to become ...
 3. “a kind of firstfruits” = the first part; first portion; foretaste; the beginning (of a sacrifice)
 - a. in the O.T.: the first of the harvest, orchard, flock, or herd offered to God (**Exo. 23:19; Lev. 23:20**)
 1. an act of worship to put God first in priority, above all *material* things; the first of the harvest
 - b. in the N.T.: the resurrection of Jesus as the first to be raised from the dead (**1 Cor. 15:20**)
 1. the first one (of many brothers) to experience the new life intended by God for his people
 - c. believers are designed by God to be the *first* of all “his creatures” (**i.e.** humanity) to be drawn from the world unto him – we are the first part of the harvest offered unto him, and we follow the One who first came from the grave in victory, the first One to be drawn to the Father
 4. **principle: all that we experience in our testings of faith in the world are what God is doing to separate us from everyone else, to draw us out as a unique people, a people he loves**
 - a. the gift of an all-knowing, immutable God is to draw us to himself in this inscrutable way
 - b. **the Lord’s Supper:** a reminder to us of *both* what Christ has done *and* what God is doing for us now: a reminder of our unique place amongst all the people of the world *in him* (**read 1 Cor. 11:26**)