

James 1:16-17 ESV (Pg. 586) 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. **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.

- I. "In the beginning" Genesis 1:1 tells us, "God created the heavens and the earth". Most of us acknowledge this fact. Few would argue that all things didn't have their origin in God. But have you ever asked yourself why God created?
 - A. The **fact** of God's creation is written in these immortal words in the first verse, of the first chapter, of the first book of the Bible. We have to look to the Bible's last book to discover the simple (but glorious) answer to **why** they were created.
 1. As the 24 heavenly elders worship the Lamb, they say: **Revelation 4:11 ESV** "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."
 2. To say that all things exist by God's will means that there are no accidents; there are only designs. Things exist because God takes particular pleasure in them, and He derives glory and worship from their creation and existence.
 - a) All great truths of the Christian religion start at this point: the glory of God. Paul says "from him and through him and to him are all things."
 - b) That all things are "from him" means everything that ever was, or will be, originates with God. All things are "through him" means that he is not only the one who conceives of all things, but he also exerts the power necessary to bring them to pass. That all things are "to him" means that every atom of the created world, and every unseen thing in the spirit world exists for God's purposes, and ultimately serve to bring him glory.
 - B. But the Genesis creation account reveals something more about the self-revealing, self-glorifying God that we shouldn't miss. **Genesis 1:26 ESV** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And **let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**" **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **28** And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and **fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**"
 1. This creative God, the rightful deed-holder of everything he created, has so orchestrated life so that he will receive glory from it all. He takes the entire earth and hands it over as a gift for humankind to subdue and manage.
 - a) In the lofty position of being the image-bearers of God, they are given the privilege and the charge to take dominion over what God has created. This speaks of bestowed rulership, where they serve only under God.
 - b) This high estate is not granted to any of the lower beasts; but neither is it granted to any of the most glorious angels. One can barely fathom a more impressive gift than to be granted the entire world by its Creator!

2. So we see that the God who created everything for his pleasure and his glory cannot help but give it away generously to the least deserving. Think about how unqualified Adam was for this job! He had just begun breathing when God hands him the keys to an entire planet. He is God's reigning King.
 - a) If Adam and Eve could be expected to do anything great or small with this gift, they would have to live in constant dependence on God, who had given it to them, because they had no experience and knew nothing!
 - b) Yet it was God's great pleasure to give it. He wasn't anxious or nervous at all as he blessed the couple and commanded them to subdue the wild planet. He ordered them to be fruitful and multiply, so that others would soon share the joy and the responsibility of ownership and stewardship.
- C. A survey of the Bible reveals that giving generously is always the habit of God. James proclaimed this in our text this morning. **“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.”** James says we serve a God who is generous and dependable.
1. He begins by saying “do not be deceived”. He'd been telling his readers that God was not the author of temptation, followed by explaining how sin and temptation work, that they originate in the heart of the one who is tempted.
 - a) Now he shows them what does come from the heart of God, “every good gift and every perfect gift”. All God does for his own is for our benefit. If it is good (or results in good), it is from God. If it results ultimately in destruction, despair, or depravity it is from Satan or other sinful people.
 - b) Sometimes we can't immediately recognize the source or value of hard things, because God, in his goodness uses them to bring about good for us, and glory for his own name. But in the end, for God's people, everything will prove glorious, no matter how it feels right now in this life.
 - c) **Romans 8:28 ESV** **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**
 2. James also calls God the “Father of lights”. Some of your translations might say “heavenly lights”. This is a reference to the sun, moon and stars. James is saying that the heavenly bodies are evidence of God's generosity, as they symbolize provision of warm days, cool nights, and annual seasons.
 - a) But they also serve to remind us that God is over and above his creation (not a part of it). As Creator, he is the “Father” (originator) of lights (celestial bodies). If so, is there anything that he can't do for you?
 - b) As creator, he doesn't change like the sky or the weather. Light doesn't change to darkness with God. James describes his constancy: “with (God) there is no variation or shadow due to change.” He never turns, changes, or varies; and he never casts a shadow. He's always generous.
- II. If God never changes, that means the same world-gifting God we read about in Genesis is no less generous with his people today! In Genesis we read of a God who gave his vice-regents a place to live and food to eat. Even when they failed miserably in their job, God provided a promise in their despair, and even gave them clothing, so he wouldn't send them naked into a hostile and violent world.

- A. Jesus comforted his own disciples by telling them that our Father is still aware that we have real-world, temporal needs (shelter, food, clothing). **Matthew 6:31 ESV** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
1. Jesus says that it is the task of people who don’t know God to worry and fret over their next meal, the roof over their head, and warm clothing to wear; but those who know the living God have no need to worry. He clothes flowers and feeds birds! He’s aware of our needs before we even ask him to provide.
 - a) That doesn’t mean that we don’t ask him for those things or thank him when he provides them, though. To both ask God for provision and thank him for it demonstrates that we depend on him for everything in life.
 - b) Jesus instructed us to pray: **Matthew 6:11 ESV** Give us this day our daily bread. This is an acknowledgement that we’d have nothing without him.
 2. I’ve asked God make me more aware of his provision, and therefore more grateful when he provides. Like many of you, I think of something as basic as my food as being provided by Wal-Mart or United. This is a mistake.
 - a) Decades ago it was easier for families to cry out to God to provide, and to thank him when he did, because most of them grew, raised or hunted for their food. Without provision of rain or game, families would starve.
 - b) But even though we have supermarkets, we are no less dependent on God’s provision for every bite of food we will enjoy. We are dependent upon him for every dollar we have to provide for our families. What if God were to remove your job so you could know how much you need him?
- B. I would love to see God’s people move from “saying the blessing” as a pre-meal religious ritual, to truly thanking God from the heart for what he’s provided. And it’s not just about food! We should daily thank God for our jobs, our friends, our church, the loving companionship of our spouse, our freedom, the protection God grants to our children, the wisdom he bestows in tough situations, etc.
1. **1 Thessalonians 5:18 ESV** give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. We give thanks for everything because either everything came from God, or he is working through it for our good.
 2. We give thanks in good times when provision is abundant, and we give thanks in bad times when times are hard as a way to genuinely acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus, rejoicing because he is absolutely in control.
- C. People neglect true thankfulness because they give themselves too much credit for providing for ourselves. We boast of being a hard worker, a great money manager, a thrifty shopper, a self-made man or woman, a go-getter, a self-starter, etc. All of these things can be noble and important. It beats being lazy, irresponsible, unmotivated or apathetic or sure!
1. **Colossians 1:29 ESV** For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. It’s OK to work hard, as long as you realize that the strength for your labor is even a gift from God, and thank him for it!
 2. But we also must remember that no matter what gifts, talents and abilities we have, that there are some things we can never do for ourselves. We are completely helpless. This is where we see God’s provision most of all.

- III. **Romans 5:7 ESV** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The Bible says that before Christ found us we were “weak sinners”. To say we were weak is to say that we lacked the power to remedy our situation. No one was / is good enough or could be. To say that we were sinners juxtaposes us against God’s holy nature.
- A. This is a problem for us, because God cannot tolerate or overlook sin, so we were doomed to be separated from him forever. It is so bad that Ephesians said we were all dead in our sins. No one is more helpless than a dead man!
1. But the miracle is that this compassionate, planet-gifting God saw us and loved us. He could not simply ignore our debt, and put aside his holy wrath. That would be to act contrary his holy nature, causing him to become less than a perfectly holy God. So in love, he came up with a glorious solution.
 2. God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ the Son, would bear both the penalty and punishment for the sins of those whom he would call to himself. Those sins would be punished in his own body on the cross.
- B. Romans says that this is how God remained perfectly just (punishing sin) and also could be the justifier of those whom he would call to himself. This is what is meant by the most famous verse in all of scripture: **John 3:16 ESV** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Just like in the garden, God loved, so he gave.
1. People will often come to me with some complaint about God’s handling of some temporary situation in their lives, and will end up saying, “I wish God would show me he loves me” or “I wish God would give me this or that”.
 2. As long as a bloody cross stands on Calvary’s hill, you need no more evidence that God loves you! As long as we sing and preach of the death of the King of Heaven, you have no right to demand a greater gift from God!
- C. And yet, scripture teaches that that bloody cross is also proof that he will wonderfully provide for everything beneficial we need. **Romans 8: 32 ESV** 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?
1. The Bible promises for those who trust in Christ include shelter, food and clothing (where most of us spend all of our time worrying!); but it also promises greater treasures as well: his flawless Word, power, love, soundness of mind, wisdom, peace, self-control, energy, insight - all brought to us by the Holy Spirit (who is God himself, given as a gift to live within us)!
 2. **2 Peter 1:3 ESV** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, **4** by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. “All things” through “great and precious promises”!
- IV. How can anyone read the scriptures or look to Christ and deny that God is a gracious and generous God? Yet though he has redeemed us, we are often ungrateful, stingy, selfish, and lacking in compassion. May we not wait another day

to repent, asking God to cause us to reflect his goodness and generosity to all around us. May we do so as an act of eternal worship and gratitude to the Holy God who has spared no expense to rescue and cause us to be blessed!

A. Prayer of repentance.

B. Acknowledgement of provision, thankfulness

- V. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- VI. **Benediction:** “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”