

James - Good Gifts

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[0:00] So we're in James. We have been in the book of James for the last few Sundays. And James, again, is one of those books that is full of, it's often called the Proverbs of the New Testament. We think of Proverbs in the Old Testament, it's a book of wisdom.

A book that has a lot of practical, day-to-day advice of things that we should do, of ways that we should think, and we need to apply it to our life. That is a lot of what James is. A lot of just solid, where the rubber meets the road, this is how we should live, and this is how we should think. So we are continuing with that today. We are in James 1, and we're going to look at verses 17 through 20 to start with. So I encourage you to turn there if you have your Bibles. And as we read God's Word, I'm going to ask if you're able, if you would stand this morning as we hear from God's Word.

James 1, beginning in verse 17, and this is what it shares. Every good and perfect, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

[1:22] For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Let's pray together. Lord God, we once again thank You for this day that You have seen fit to give us, to allow us to experience.

Remind us that just this day of life is a gift from You. The ability to be here in Your house, to be among our Christian family, is another gift from You.

To be able to read from Your Word freely is another gift from You. And the list goes on and on, but we thank You for all these things. And Lord, we thank You that You are a God that desires to speak to us, to talk with us.

And now, Lord, we just pray that we are people that have a desire to hear and to listen. So speak to our hearts, help us to listen, and help us to respond, to grow, to be shaped in the ways that You want us to grow and be shaped.

Let Your Word accomplish today, Lord, what You want it to. And it's in the name of Jesus that we pray and all God's people said, Amen. You can be seated this morning. The first verse that we read, verse 17, does that sound familiar at all?

[2:30] Yeah, it probably sounds familiar because it's a verse I know I repeat a lot because I think it is so important that we understand this verse. It is a tremendous, wonderful verse in God's Word. All God's Word is good.

It says it's all profitable for us. It's all good for us. But this is one of those verses that I do think in our lives we need to constantly keep in mind. It is vital that we keep this in mind because it really does shape how we think.

It shapes how we relate to the world, how we relate to others, how we face every day when we wake up. Look at the first thing it says, every, what does that word every mean?

All. It means all of them. It means complete. Every, all of them. Every good gift. What's a gift?

Something that you get, something freely given, something that you did.

Do you work for a gift? Do you earn a gift? No, it's just something that you are given. So that is what a gift is. And it says every good gift. So we're talking about good things here.

[3:37] Every good gift. We'll get to the every perfect gift in a minute. But every good gift is from above. From the Father of lights.

Who is the Father of lights? God. Every good gift is from God. Every good thing that you experience in your life is from who? God.

How many, how many good things do you experience? Okay. It's easy for us to say a lot, but start thinking, what all does that include? Every good gift. What, what, what does that include? In your life, what does that include? Life itself. You're all breathing today, right? God's given you life. What other good gifts right now are you experiencing?

Health, the health to be here this morning. Joy, joy that we have in our lives. Family, our children, our home that we have to live in.

[4:38] Our church that we have to go to, our salvation that God gives us. Our animals that we have that we can enjoy. I mean, some of these seem like big things and some seem like little things, but they're all good gifts, aren't they?

What else? Like we've exhausted the list, right? Transportation, cars that we have to get from here to there. Are you thankful for that? You glad you didn't walk here this morning?

Glad you didn't have to ride a horse? Pedal here on a bicycle? What else? Indoor plumbing. You grateful for that?

Is that a good gift in your life? What else? A stove to cook food on or refrigerator to keep food cold? A lot of things, I'm sorry. Electricity. Kind of nice to have light in here, isn't it? Heat and air conditioning, depending on what you need at any given moment, because the range we're comfortable in is about this big, isn't it?

[5:46] All these things, folks, and we realize that we could go on and on with that. From the big to the little, all the things that we experience that we would call good in our lives.

It says that they have come from God. And I know sometimes we like to think some of these things, well, I've earned it. I supplied it for myself. I bought it. I purchased it. I worked for it. How did you have the ability to do any of that?

How did you have the health to do that? How did you have the intelligence to do that? Where did that come from? From God. All these things stem from God, not us. Every good gift of which there are so many come from God.

And we need to recognize how many good gifts we have. Because a lot of these, will you admit we take them for granted? I'm willing to admit that. I take so many things for granted in my life.

So many things. Until we don't have it, we don't think about it, right? I mean, somebody said electricity. You don't think about it. You flip the switch, you expect what to happen. Lights come on.

[6:50] You hit the air conditioner, you expect what to happen. Expect it to get cooler. You don't even think about it until when? Until it doesn't work. And then all of a sudden you're like, oh, I really need this in my life.

I need to get it fixed now. It's only when we don't have it we realize how important to us it really is. Every good gift is from above, from God.

We as believers need to constantly be reminded of that. Because we have a God that we need to be so grateful to for all the good things in our lives. And I know there are things in all of our lives that we don't like, right?

That we wish were different. How many good things do we have that we take for granted? Every good gift is from God. But it doesn't just say every good gift.

Also every perfect gift. Now this is another category. Good and perfect are two different categories. Do we understand that? I mean, there's good, a lot of good things.

[7:51] But then there's perfect. How many perfect things do you have in your life? Think about that. Are you going to say me, dear?

Is that what you were going to say? She was looking at me and smiling, so I didn't know. Oh, I want you to say that. I mean, really, how many perfect things do we have in our lives?

Yeah. I mean, short of our salvation, there's not a whole lot of perfect things we have. Things are flawed. They break down. I mean, there's a lot of things that can go wrong with them. When it says every perfect gift, you know, in truth, there's only one perfect gift that we can have and experience in this life, and that is our salvation through Jesus Christ.

That is a perfect gift. That was the perfect gift that God gave us. Mankind was caught in sin from the beginning when Adam fell, all through the Old Testament, until Jesus came.

I mean, there was the law, and they had to sacrifice animals and all those kind of things, but man was caught in sin, and our relationship with God was flawed. That sin was a barrier to our relationship with God.

[8:59] But when Christ came and died on the cross and rose again, what happened? All of that changed. All of a sudden, our relationship with God could be fully restored because of Jesus Christ. Folks, that was the perfect gift that we needed.

Whether mankind realized it or not, it was exactly what we needed. How excited are you when you get a gift from somebody that you think, oh, that's just what I needed?

Do you like it? I mean, it's kind of exciting because it doesn't always happen. We always get Christmas or birthday, we get gifts. It's like, oh, that's nice. No, I'm never going to use it. That's really nice. Thanks. But once in a while, we get that gift like, oh, this is perfect.

I know exactly how I can use this, and I really need this. Folks, when we talk about Jesus Christ, that should be our reaction, our understanding. This is exactly what I needed. Because without this, I'm lost.

The perfect gift that it talks about is from above. It's God sending His Son, Jesus Christ. So the perfect gift and all the other good gifts come from God.

[10:04] So how thankful should we be to God? How often should we thank God for all these things? Maybe once a week in church on Sundays to think about, yeah, God's kind of good.

He's done a lot for me. Or do you think every day we should wake up thinking, God, thank you for all these things that you've brought into my life. Every good and every perfect gift. But look what it says, comes down from the Father of lights.

We've established that's God. Look how it describes God. God, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. That's important. What does that mean? He doesn't change.

The God that we serve does not change. If He gave us that perfect gift a couple thousand years ago when Jesus Christ died on the cross, do you think God still wants to give us good things in our lives?

Yes. He loved us then, and guess what? He loves us now. Even when He sent Christ a couple thousand years ago to this earth, His Son, to live and to die for us, did He know that you were going to live right now in this period of time?

[11:12] Yes. Because He knows all. Did He know how much you needed Jesus Christ to forgive your sins? Absolutely. God does not change. He loved us then, and He loves us now.

He sent Christ to die for us then, and guess what? If He hadn't then, He'd do it now, because He loves us just the same. We have a God that does not change, and I don't know about you, but I like that.

Because so very few things in our life are stable like that. Everything else changes, doesn't it? How many things changed in your life in the last five years, in the last ten years?

Things change, and they change so quickly. And we don't know how they're going to change. We don't know what challenges we're going to face, but to know that we have a God that does not change, that we can always look to and lean on, folks, that's another gift from Him.

Just His nature that is unchanging is a gift that we have to experience. So it is a God that does not change. And then look at verse 18, because these verses are full of so much wisdom for us.

[12:20] Of His own will begat He, that means He created us with the word of truth. Well, there is a word that in our world today, it's kind of at a shortage, isn't it?

Truth. It says we were created in and for truth. What does that really mean?

Well, who is the one that is always true and does not change? God. Guess what? We were created to have a relationship with Him. We were created to be connected with God.

That was the truth that we are created in. And yet, mankind often wants to deny even that, doesn't it? Mankind wants to deny that God exists. We want to deny that we're made to have a relationship with Him.

But folks, guess what? That is the truth. We were created to have a relationship with our God. So, knowing all this, the beginning of verse 19 says, Wherefore.

[13:24] That means, because you understand all this, listen to this next part. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let... And there's that word again, every.

Let every man... So, who does that include? Say, this includes me. You didn't all say it. Say, this includes me.

All right. This means men, women. I mean, it means all of us. Let every man... Here are three things that it tells us that we need to make sure we do. Understanding how good God is. Understanding how much He loves us.

Understanding we're made to have a relationship with Him. Understanding all the good things He's given us. Therefore, these are things we need to understand. Let every man be swift to hear. I already talked a little bit about listening. What does it mean to be swift to hear? Swift to listen. Pay attention, because it's important.

[14 : 33] Anything else? A little dog that just focuses their attention and just waiting to hear what comes next.

A dog is eager to listen. Listen. Are we eager to listen to God? That's really what it means, swift to hear. Let us be eager to hear what God has to say.

We should be anticipating it. We should be on the edge of our seat like, God, what do you want to tell me next? What do you have to tell me next? That's what it means to be swift to hear. And again, we talked about that does not always describe us, does it?

We can say, well, I don't really want to listen this morning. I got other things on my mind. If we're focused on other things, are we swift to hear? I know in my life it's a challenge. I'm not talking spiritually, but just physically.

I'll be at home working on something in the garage, and I am someone that when I'm working on something, I'm pretty focused. Tammy could come out and have an entire conversation. And guess what?

[15 : 43] I might turn around at some point, oh, you're here. Did you say something? And I would have no idea that she said anything to me to begin with.

Is that being swift to hear? Is that ever us? Think about it. We get so focused on our lives. We get so involved. And it can be good things. I might be working on something good in the garage, something beneficial.

We get focused on good things. It can be activities. It can be hobbies. It can be work. It can be things that we need to do. And yet sometimes we become so focused on those that when God speaks, guess what?

We don't hear. Because we're so focused on this right here. Folks, all the time and all that we do, we should have a consciousness of God. Just an understanding that, you know, as I work, I'm doing this for God.

As I work, as I'm with my family, as I'm doing whatever, we should always be ready to hear if God speaks. And doing things in a way that is pleasing to Him. So we have to be swift to hear.

[16 : 49] So that sometimes is a challenge. Would you admit that? We have talked about the things in James are not always easy. And this list kind of gets harder, I think, as it goes. Swift to hear.

That can be a little hard. This next part for some of us is even a step harder. What is the next thing? Slow to speak. What does that mean?

If you didn't hear that, Scott said, shut up. Are we always good at keeping our mouths shut? Why not?

It can be with our spouse. It can be with our children. It can be with our parents. It can be with our family member. It can be with a friend. It can be with a co-worker. It can be with a person behind a cash register. It could be with whoever.

Why are we sometimes slow to speak? What's that? We think we know better. Any other thoughts?

[17 : 50] None of you are ever have any problem controlling your responses? It's just me. We don't know what to say.

Sometimes we're impulsive. Being slow to speak. What does that really mean? It means think before you speak.

It means say things that would be pleasing to God. But how often when we are quick to speak do we end up saying something that God would not be pleased with? Does that ever happen?

Where we're not slow to speak because we just respond instantly? I have admitted to all of you that that is often me if I'm driving the car. It's the truth.

I'm not always slow to speak. Somebody cuts me off, I'm very quick to speak. Somebody who does something that I think they're not driving correctly, because they're not, but... I'm not slow to speak.

[18 : 51] I'm quick to say, you dummy, or get out of my way, and then I see somebody from the church and I feel so guilty. It's the truth. Because we're not always slow to speak.

We want to get our response in. We want to get what we have to say out there. But so often it says here to be slow to speak. That's what God desires.

That we control that part of ourselves. So again, this is a little harder being slow to speak. And then the last one can be even harder. Slow to wrath.

Slow to anger. We get angry, don't we, at times? Some of us quicker and easier than others, but we all get there. And again, the problem with not being slow to speak or not being slow to anger is the result of those things are so often we're doing things that are not pleasing to God.

We're not responding. We're not speaking. And we're not acting in ways that God would be pleased with. When you act in anger, how often do you think God would look and say, oh, good job there?

[19 : 57] That's not usually the case, is it? Because we let those emotions rule us. And that's what it says in verse 20. For the wrath of man. For the wrath of man, this anger that we sometimes have, the way that we respond, our quick tongue, that we're so quick to speak, this wrath of man, worketh not the what?

Righteousness of God. Righteousness of God. Righteousness of God. What that means, folks?

Righteousness is things that please God. It means when we respond in anger, when we're quick to respond, so often the response that we have is not pleasing to God.

It does not lead to righteousness or right behavior in God's eyes. And here's the thing, folks, our objective in life, our number one goal in life should be righteousness.

That means our number one goal should be pleasing God in our lives. Is there really anything more important than that? Than pleasing God? That is the righteousness that God has a desire to see in us.

Us doing things that please Him, that are righteous in His eyes. When God sees us doing that, you know what? He is pleased with us. Is that our goal and objective in life? Don't answer that, but I want you to consider that.

[21 : 24] Pleasing God. Is that our number one thing in life? And you know, the wonderful thing is, you know, we look at these verses and we look at our desire to please God.

And we know at times we'll fail, won't we? Look at all the people in the Bible. Whoever you pick, did they fail at times? But I think of ones like David that we've been studying on Wednesday nights.

He failed often. And yet he always came back to that desire he had to please God. And folks, that's what we need to continually come back to. And if you don't remember anything else from James here that we're reading here is, we should have a burning desire to please God in all that we do.

And you know, this morning is an amazing and wonderful morning because we have two people that are going to be baptized. And do you know what baptism is all about? What's baptism all about? It's about pleasing God, isn't it?

I mean, look at the root of baptism, what it is truly all about. It's about pleasing God. And I know when it comes to baptism, and I've thought about this a lot over the years, baptism has a lot of variables.

[22 : 40] There's a lot of different ways it's done, and there's some different thoughts about baptism. You know, it depends on what church you go to. You might be baptized forward. You might be baptized backwards.

You might be dunked once, dunked three times. I don't know. There's different ways to do it, isn't there? You can be baptized in a pond, in a swimming pool, in a river, in a lake, in an animal trough. I've seen that done. You can be baptized in any of those things, can't you? Does any of that make any difference? No. Why not? Because it's about your closeness with God in that moment.

It's about your closeness with God. It's because the physical act of it doesn't matter what water you're in or where. It doesn't matter whether you go forwards or backwards. What matters is what we've been talking about this morning, having a desire in your heart to please God.

You know, the example that Jesus Christ gave us, it's in Matthew 3, and you don't have to turn there, but I want you to listen to this. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.

[23 : 48] But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee. How comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.

Isn't that what we're talking about this morning? Fulfilling righteousness, things that are pleasing to God. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.

And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well...

Finish the verse. Pleased. We're talking about righteousness and pleasing God. When Jesus was baptized, a voice from heaven said, This is my Son.

I am pleased with what he's doing. Folks, baptism is about our obedience. It's about that desire that we have to please God in our lives.

[24:56] It's not about getting cleaner physically. We take showers for that. But it's about showing what happened inside. Our sins being forgiven. Our sins being washed away.

And we're showing that. And we're doing it by being obedient to God. Do you think God is pleased when he sees people be baptized? Do you think?

And again, it's not the act. Is it baptism that gets us into heaven? No. Can you go to heaven if you haven't been baptized?

Yes. The Bible says, Believe in your heart and believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and you shall be saved. That's what gets us into heaven, our faith and trust and belief in Jesus Christ.

Baptism doesn't get us there. But the next step in having a desire to please God is baptism. That desire we have to be pleasing in our God's eyes.

[25:53] That's what baptism is all about. And I praise God that we have two people that have had a desire in their heart this morning to be baptized. You know, as a pastor, it just brings me...

You know, there's several things as a pastor I really enjoy. You know I love baby dedications, right? You know I love that. So young ladies keep having babies. I like that. Love baby dedications.

And I love baptisms. You know, baby dedications are all about a new birth, right? So is baptism. It's about that new birth we have in Jesus Christ.

It's about our sins being washed away and God giving us that clean heart. And I love baptisms. And it should excite all of us as a church, as a church body, to have people that have a desire to be baptized.

And again, this is what Jesus asked us to do. Also in Matthew chapter 28, you know this verse.

Jesus said, this is right before He ascended up into heaven. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

[27:06] So this morning, that's what we get to witness. Two people that have that desire to please God and be baptized. And we're going to have a word of prayer and then we're going to go ahead with our baptism.

So let's just bow our heads this morning. Lord God, we just thank You for this morning that You've given us. And Lord, we thank You for Your Word and I pray that we are swift to hear it. That we have ears that are open and just listening to Your Word.

And Lord, that we're slow to speak and slow to anger. Lord, that we have a desire in our heart to do things and say things that are pleasing to You.

That that is the goal and objective we have in life, to please You as our God. And Lord, I thank You for the two that are going to be baptized this morning. I know it's pleasing to You. But Lord, I pray for each one of us that are gathered here today that we would also have that desire.

That our lives would be pleasing in Your sight because You're the only opinion that truly matters. So Lord, just work that within our hearts as we go through our lives. Help us to remember that.

[28:07] And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.