

God's Perfect Gifts

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. 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. (James 1:16-18)

I confess to you, that sometimes, as I first begin to read a passage, such as this one, my first thought is to wonder what exactly these words have to do with the words that came just before them, words about “temptation”, and about lustful desires that lead us to “fall into sin” and “trials of many kinds”. These words in today’s passage about “good and perfect gifts” seem not to relate.

But we must always keep in mind that such is never really the case with God and with His precious truth. All of these scriptures are intricately connected with each other, leading us and guiding us along what God calls, His “narrow way”, a “way” that is often difficult to navigate, but one that will lead us to life.

And these words remind us that our God is ever and always intimately involved in everything that is taking place, whether it be trials and suffering, or it be His giving of “good and perfect gifts. And often, they are one in the same!

God is ever and always “sovereign” over all the diverse matters of life. And, He is always providentially providing continual “hands-on” guidance and direction in all those matters, especially when we purpose to “trust in Him with all our hearts and lean not to our own understanding”.

I love the words in Hebrews chapter 1 that tell us that the Lord Jesus has His powerful Hand continually at work, in literally every minute detail of existence. Listen, beginning in verse one of Hebrew 1,

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who

being the brightness of *His* (God's) glory and the express image of His person, and upholding (sustaining) all things by the word of His power. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

This verse 3, here of Hebrews 1, tells us “plainly” that the Lord Jesus not only was the “maker” and “creator” of all things, but that He also “upholds it”. He did not just create this world and then stand back and let it run on its own, as many seem to think. Jesus is also the “sustaining power” within all that He created. “Everything”!

And Jesus does not just “uphold” and “sustain” and facilitate all the “physical” elements that make up the heavens and the earth, He is also the “sustaining power” within every activity and every event that takes place on the earth, even to every molecule of air that we breathe. Nothing exists or lives or moves or has its being except but by the intimate and ongoing sustaining presence and power of the Lord Jesus.

Think about that folks. That is a completely incomprehensible thought, but it is absolutely true. The wisest of the wise on this earth do not comprehend it. They choose instead to explain away this precious truth through some form of intellectual or scientific rationale or another.

But folks, listen, the rain doesn't fall, and the earth doesn't turn, and we don't take our next breath without the intimate ongoing “good and perfect gift” of the sustaining presence and power of the Lord Jesus.

And that is exactly what we have been talking about in these words that we've been studying over the past few weeks. These trials and these sufferings that are taking place are all a part of God's mysterious and wonderful “sustaining” of the matters of His creation.

And our “faith”, spoken about here in the first verses of this James chapter 1, means that we have joined with the Lord Jesus and are doing our part to carry forward the “plan” He has set into place.

And here in our text for today, God tells us, in no uncertain terms that He is giving us everything that we need to carry out our part of His plan. He tells us,

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Referring to deceptions such as all of the scientific theories and intellectual rationale that is brandished about by the wise men and women of this world, He tells us . . .

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. 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. (James 1:16-18)

We are not to be deceived, “carried away” by the erroneous teachings of earth’s “wisest of the wise”. We must always begin and end with the simple truth that, if we can think it, if we can see it and if we can do it, it is of and by and through Jesus Christ, who is not only the creator, but also the sustaining power within every part of it.

As we’re reminded in Romans 11,

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

Folks, even our “faith” itself, the “faith” by which we believe in Christ is a “gift”, a “free gift”. And then also, any of the abilities we have, abilities to think and carry out our daily responsibilities, it is all of Christ and His doing. And best of all, as we are told here, everything that He does, and everything He gives to us is “good and perfect”.

And we can fully trust that everything that He does is always “good and perfect”, because He never varies or changes. His holiness, His righteousness, and His truth are true today, tomorrow and forever, and in every circumstance of life.

And that is such an important truth for us to understand and accept and rely on. God is always trustworthy. He never ever changes. He is immutable. His truth today is true tomorrow and for every other moment in every circumstance.

Why do I mention that? It’s because we are living in a day and a time and a culture when there is no “stability of truth”. People at the highest levels of academia and of our governments are telling us that the things that were true in years past are not appropriate for today’s culture. They tell us that the basic guiding documents of our government must change and flow with the changes of culture.

And many of our church denominational leaders are saying much the same about our scriptures, and about the basic doctrines that have brought us the blessed salvation that we treasure so faithfully. Those leaders are telling us that we must change our ministry to fit the times and the culture in which we live, that yesterday's truth is no longer true, that we must change in order to stay "relevant" to our congregations.

And that "lie" is being loudly proclaimed about some of the most prominent of social issues, issues like those supporting a woman's free choice to kill her unborn baby.

And it is being screamed from the rooftops that men and women should be able to profane their bodies with men and women of the same sex, even to marry them, and demanding that our church doctrines change in order to stay relevant to and accepting of our people.

And as I have mentioned to you in an earlier message, one of the most prominent preachers in one of the largest churches in Atlanta, declares weekly that the bible is no longer relevant. That we must especially "unhitch" our faith from the Old Testament.

That preacher is apparently willing to ignore the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 that tell us that those old Testament scriptures are "God Breathed". Recall that at the time the Apostle Paul wrote these words of 2 Timothy, very little of the New Testament had been written.

Sadly, God knew very well that such things would take place. And He warned us in 2 Timothy 4, saying . . .

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Dear friends, this kind of teaching and preaching is so prevalent within our mainline churches today, church leaders saying words that "tickle the itching ears" of the listeners, but have no basis of real truth within them.

But please know that God's Holy truth stands separate and above the opinions, and the desires and the teachings of men. And that truth is clearly given within the pages of these scriptures. And it is the same today as it was yesterday and even before the foundations of the earth.

God's precious "words of truth" are one of His best "good and perfect gifts from above". Listen again to verse 17 of our text . . .

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. (James 1:17)

And listen also to verse 18, words so precious to us.

18 Of his own Will he (God) brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

The great bible teacher, A. W. Tozer would use an expression when describing our ability to understand some of these scriptures. He would say, that a "plain man" can read and understand these words. And that is so with these words of verse 18. It does not take a theologian to understand that it was God, of His own Will, and not our own, who has saved us.

18 Of his own Will he (God) brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

May I also repeat a scripture verse that I gave to you in an earlier message? In 1 Peter 1:3 we read

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)

Note again, those words "caused", and "born again".

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)

These words speak essentially the same truth as verse 18 of today's text, and they are absolutely profound! They speak of a power beyond anything you and I can possess. And God tells us so clearly that we "plain men" and "plain women" can understand this "truth", that it is God, and God alone, who has brought salvation into our souls.

It was not our own random "free will" decision. He Himself "caused" us to be "born again". And yes, we did, at some point in the transaction, agree with Him and accepted His "call". And we prayed that "sinner's prayer", and received Christ into our heart.

And yes, our willfully accepting and receiving Christ as our Savior and Lord is a necessary part of the transaction of our salvation. But listen, it was never we ourselves who thought up the idea of our salvation and then brought it into being. The unchangeable truth is, "it was and always is God as the first-cause", not you and not me, but God and God alone.

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. (James 1:18)

Folks, again, these are profound words, and even "mysterious". Because the "Word of Truth" spoken about here is not only these precious words of scripture, they are also actually the person of the Lord Jesus. Again, "mysterious"! He, Jesus, is the "Living Word" of God.

And in other places in these scriptures, Jesus is also spoken of as being the "Firstfruit" of all creation. And now here, God is saying that He, God, has done an amazing thing in your life and my life, saving us and bringing us forth to be as Jesus, to be "firstfruits" of Christ, the Vine.

You might recall those words in John 15. There Jesus said to His disciples, and to us, that He is the Vine, the True Vine, and we are the branches. And because we have been "born again" in Him, out from us, His "branches", will spring forth "fruits of righteousness", fruits that are only possible because, and as, we "abide" in Him.

Folks, yes, this truly is mysterious wording, but if we will accept its truth, as "plain men" and "plain women", it will become simple to our understanding, that as we do our part and we "abide in Him", in Christ, we will begin to "bear much fruit", fruits of God's Holy

Spirit, that pours out from our souls into all the other souls that we encounter, bearing even more “fruit”. Isn’t God’s “plan” amazing!

And folks, thankfully, God does not expect us to do this “fruit bearing” on our own, by our own “wits” and abilities. As “firstfruits” of Christ’s gift of salvation, here God is assuring us that before He sends us out, He will give us the “gifts” necessary to “equip” us for every work He’ll call us to undertake, and also “gifts” to equip us for every circumstance of life.

And He does dear friends! An amazing thing takes place in us as we “abide in His Vine”. We are suddenly able to “think things” and to “do things” that we were not able to think and to do before. “Wisdom” will come out from our mouths that we know we don’t naturally possess. We will accomplish things that we don’t have the intellect or the power to accomplish by our own abilities.

Listen! Whatsoever God purposes for us to do as His newly adopted children, He will pour into us the special “gifts” we’ll need to be able to accomplish them.

May I say that again . . . Whatsoever God purposes for us to do as His newly adopted children, He will pour into us the special “gifts” we’ll need to be able to accomplish them.

May I read about some of those gifts. They’re found in several places in these scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 12, we read

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

And then also in Romans 12

⁵ (We) are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if

prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:5-8)

And then also in

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Folks, isn't this wonderful? Each of us has been given special good and perfect gifts from the Holy Spirit, gifts that God wants us to use to carry out His plan here on this earth. As He told us here,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)

And you and I need to be especially diligent to search our souls and determine which of these gifts has been given to us, and then to get about using them.

God has commanded us to "Go Ye!", and we must go! It is a command, not an invitation! You and I are now His adopted children, part of His "Royal Family". And that means that we now have responsibilities that we didn't have before!

He has called us to carry out those special responsibilities. And with His "Spiritual Gifts" He has fully equipped us to do it. He is sending us out and we must go.

And may I say, we dare not think thoughts such as, I'm too old, or too infirmed to do things. No! God knows exactly what we are able to do, and He has "fitted" us perfectly with "gifts" to do the things He has called us to do.

Let me repeat those words for us,

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. 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.
(James 1:16-18)

Can we not see His plan here in these words? We are now “fruits” on the Vine of Christ. And as “fruits”, we are to nourish and uplift others, and to distribute seeds for more “fruits”. That is an amazing plan!

With His “Spiritual Gifts” that He has equipped us with, we are able to do things we could not do before. And, we must! We must!

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. (James 1:18)

Let's pray!