

LIFE AFTER FAITH
A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF JAMES

LESSON 8 – GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME – JAMES 1:17

In C.S. Lewis' book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, there's a scene where the children hear for the first time about Aslan the Lion, who is a representation of Jesus. After Mr. Beaver explains that Aslan is a Lion, Susan says, "I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." To this, Mrs. Beaver says, "If there is anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." Young Lucy asks, "Then he isn't safe?" Mr. Beaver answers with one of his best lines from the book. He says, "'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

In our last lesson, James told us that God can never be accused of tempting people to sin...God can never be blamed for anything evil. Here in verse 17, he explains that the God we serve is perpetually good...both in who He is...and in what He does. What we can expect from Him is good. When we understand the nature of God...as much as we really can anyway...it will affect how we relate to Him. Looking at this one verse, we find three applications for our relationship with our God who is good all the time.

We Should Be Appreciative for the Gifts in Our Lives

James starts verse 17 by telling us, "Every good and perfect gift is from above..." The things we enjoy in life...the blessings that sweeten our existence on this earth, are not the results of our labors. They come to us from above as gifts from God. There are actually two meanings for the word "gift." The first of these describes the act of giving rather than the thing that is given. Before James points us to the gift, he wants us to consider the giver. The gifts are good, but the one who gives them is even better.

For us, it's possible to give a good gift, but to give it in the wrong attitude. You can give something good, but give it grudgingly. Here James reminds us that when God gives to us, we can be certain that He is giving out of a genuine love for us. God is good not only because of what He gives, but also because of the way He gives.

The second meaning of that word "gift" is, of course, talking about the thing being given. James talks about good and perfect gifts coming from God. The gifts God gives us are perfect for fulfilling the purposes He has for our lives. They are the perfect gifts for us. Have you ever gotten a gift from someone and thought, "What I am going to do with this," or "Why did they give this to me?"

What James is telling us here in verse 17, is that God does not give bad gifts. He gives perfect gifts. In fact, every good gift and every perfect gift in your life has been given to you by God. When we consider all the blessed gifts we enjoy in our lives, we should be appreciative to the Lord for each and every one of them.

We Should Be Amazed at the Grace in Our Lives

Even though James does not use the word in this verse, what he is describing here is grace. The good and perfect gifts that come down to us from God, are because of His grace. James describes God as the "Father of the heavenly lights." In other words, he's reminding us that the God who created the sun, moon and stars is the same God who shows undeserving favor toward us.

David asked in Psalm 8:4, "what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"

When we consider the fact that the God of the universe knows our name and blesses our life, we should be amazed by His grace.

When James says that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father, he's describing an action that has been happening and is still presently happening. One writer described it this way, "God never ceases, not for a single moment, to shower His blessings upon us." Again...even though James doesn't use the word "grace," that's exactly what he's talking about here. God's grace to us is truly amazing.

We Should Be Assured by the God of Our Lives

James gives us another theological truth in an already crowded verse when he says this about God, "...who does not change like shifting shadows." In the last few words of this verse, James assures us that the God who has blessed us in the past will continue to do so in the future because He does not change.

We are prone to change and are sometimes inconsistent. The good news is the assurance of our salvation and the hope of our future doesn't rest with OUR steadiness, but solely on the absolute steadiness of God.

James tells us that with God, there is never any change. In theological terms, this is called the immutability of God. He never differs or varies in any way...He's always the same. So, just like we saw in our last lesson, James is not introducing new theology. He is only reminding us of what the Word of God says. God has been and always will be the same.

We really need to try and understand the significance of what it is that James is teaching here. Because God never changes, His power is still as great as its ever been. Jesus...the One Who conquered the enemy of sin and death is no less the King of Kings today than He was when He ascended back to heaven. While the world shifts and changes around us, we can be assured by the fact that our God NEVER changes. He is always the same.

James has been careful to remind us that evil temptations don't come from God. In doing so, he's pointed us to the fact that our God is good all the time. By His grace He gives us every good and perfect gift. We can look to Him at all times and be assured that He is forever good. 2,000 years ago, the God who only gives good gifts gave His greatest gift in the person of Jesus Christ. As James reminds us that our God is good all the time, Jesus reminds us of just how good He is! It's when we look to Jesus that we fully understand why we should be appreciative for the gifts in our lives, amazed at the grace on our lives and assured by the God of our lives.