

(cf. John 3:3). This is made possible by the gracious work of God on our behalf.

**so that we might be** -- God's intention in the new birth is now presented.

**the first fruits** -- The background for this expression is in Leviticus 23:10. Israel is identified in this way in the Old Testament (cf. Jer. 2:3). There are two significant facts regarding the first fruits:

1. The first fruits were sacred and belonged to God. So too, believers are the special possession of the Living God (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).
2. They were also indicative of a greater harvest which would follow.

**among His creatures** -- This may be a reference to all those who will come to believe after these early Christians. The believers that James wrote to were just the beginning of a great multitude who would come to believe. In the midst of their great trial James was encouraging the believers of the diaspora that they were the "first fruits" among many that would follow.

**This may also refer more broadly to creation.** The entire creation is going to undergo a transformation as a result of the finished work of Christ. These believers are just the beginning. (cf. Rom. 8:18-23).

All good and only good comes from God. That is clearly demonstrated in the fact that He sovereignly chose to give us salvation; and not us only, but also to a great multitude who would follow in coming generations. In fact, the entire creation (excluding unbelievers) will be redeemed by His grace.

# AGAPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP PULPIT SERIES

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Let's Get Practical

Part 5

**Every Good Gift**

Practical Applications of Biblical Truth

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**Going Around the World for Jesus**

## The Source of Every Good Gift

James 1: 16-18

In the face of temptation to sin, we sometimes try to excuse ourselves by somehow involving God in the situation. However, James says that God is in no way involved in tempting people to sin.

Both the character and conduct of God rule out any possibility that He is involved in leading us into sin. Rather, James clearly identifies the source of temptation and sin as a person's own lust. The pattern is always: lust . . . sin . . . death. The point where we are to take hold and stop the process is at the point of lust. If we don't, it gets progressively out of our control. The danger then is that we begin to think that the sin or temptation must be God's will because it's so much stronger than we are. What has really happened is that sin has taken control. The end is death -- destruction and ruin.

James now shows that God is the source of all that is good. Rather than being the source of temptation and sinful activity, just the opposite is true.

I want you to imagine you are on a bridge between two points – standing in the middle of that bridge it is possible to look two ways, the way from which you have come and the point to which you are traveling. In this passage this morning, James has placed us upon a bridge – it spans the gulf between verses 13-15 and 17,18.

### **1:16- DO NOT BE DECEIVED, BELOVED BROTHERS**

**Do not be deceived** -- This verse serves as a bridge between what has just been said and what follows. As such, it can connect with either 1:13 or 1:17,18.

The connection with what immediately precedes is obvious. First of all – looking back at where we have come from –we are not to be

**deceived** concerning the way sin works. We always want to think that our situation is different, that we can escape the consequences, etc. Don't be deluded and led astray. The pattern is the same, and never varies – lust, when conceived gives birth to sin, and sin, when birthed leads to death.

But then, we look forward to the other end of our bridge

1:17 –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.

**Every good thing bestowed** -- The reference in the word used here (dosis, trans. "bestowed") is to the act of giving. So the idea is "All giving that is good." This stresses the motives and purposes of the giver.

**good** -- All giving that is helpful, useful, or beneficial.

**every perfect gift** -- The stress in the word gift (dorema) is on the gift itself.

**perfect** -- This indicates that the gift given is everything it should be. It is complete and lacks nothing.

**is from above** -- This is the same word Jesus used in John 3:3 when He told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again (another, lit. "from above"). The emphasis is that heaven is the source of good giving and good gifts. Nicodemus needed to be birthed into a life that was "from above".

**coming down** (katabainon, present participle) -- These good gifts are continually coming down upon us from heaven. James is stressing again the point that he made in 1:5 : God's character as a giving God. Remember that Satan began by raising doubts about God's goodness and generosity (cf. Gen. 3:4,5).

**Father of lights** -- This is a reference to God as the Creator of the stars (cf. Gen. 1:14-18; Ps. 136:7; Jer. 31:35).

**no variation** -- The lights in the heavens vary for a variety of reasons (e.g. we say, "The sun is really bright today").

**shifting shadow** -- A shadow that is caused by turning. This would have been very clearly seen in a sundial of that period.

**The point being made is that God does not change** (cf. Mal. 3:6, "I, the Lord, do not change"). James is telling us that Jehovah is a giving, God who always gives what is right and beneficial for the individual.

Under pressure, in the face of trial, experiencing the allurements of sin, we are often inclined to question whether God is really motivated by what is best for us. "Does He really want to give me what is good for me"

Isn't this the purpose of Satan's deception in the Garden of Eden – to instill doubt about God's motives. James now gives the greatest and clearest evidence of God's giving to meet our need, supplying what we most need: our salvation .

1:18 – Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

**In the exercise of His will** -- The point of greatest importance here is that God willed to provide salvation for us. It was a decision He made within Himself, not based upon anything we did (cf. John 1:13; Eph. 1:5,9,11; 2:4-10; 1 Pet. 1:3).

He brought us forth -- This is the same word (apkuo) used in verse 15 where we are told lust "gives birth" to sin. Sin and death come from our will, but the good gift of salvation is the result of God's exercising of His will.

**by the word of truth** -- The Word of God is the instrument that God uses to bring about the new birth (cf. Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 15:1,2; 1 Pet. 1:23).

We must be born again if we are to share in the glory of the presence of God for all eternity