

Sermon or Lesson: James 1:16-17 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Establishing An Accurate Regard For What God Gives

INTRO: In our culture, starting at an early age, children are indoctrinated that Santa Clause brings good gifts on Christmas Eve and does not bring any bad gifts. The Grinch brings those. If our culture so thoroughly embraces this concept, then why is it difficult for us believers (v.16) to hold a proper regard for God, that He gives only good and not evil?

READ: James 1:16-17

v.16 - READ

[Lesson Question: "Don't be deceived" about what?]

SECTION POINT: We are not to be deceived about what God brings and gives.

"deceived" = Strong's #4105 "go astray; to (properly, cause to) roam (from safety, truth, or virtue)"

We are not to be deceived:

- - that we are going to escape the blame and responsibility for the sins we commit; (v.14 "by his own evil desire")
- - that God would bring sin, and by extension temptation, into anyone's life; (v.13)
- - about where temptation comes from; (cf. 1 John 2:15-16)
- - about what God does bring. (v.17)

[Lesson Question: Why doesn't this verse use the word 'mistaken' or 'ignorant' rather than "deceived"?)

The word "deceived" is used here rather than 'mistaken' or 'ignorant' because:

- - This assertion points to the character of God; if God's goodness can be successfully doubted, then (like Eve in the Garden of Eden) we are more likely to give in to temptation and sin. (see Genesis 3:1-6)
 - - This is a serious matter to ascribe evil to God - the blame for our sin lies within ourselves, not God; we tend to want to blame God particularly when we are in a trial.
 - - In our practical Christian living, we need to properly understand who originates sin and temptations.
 - - There exists a propensity and perhaps an intention to be deceived or to be self-deceived, to think and believe something to be true when it is false, in this case particularly in regard to what God brings and gives in contrast to what He does not bring and give. (cf. v.1:22,26)
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v.17 - READ

[Lesson Question: From verses 13-17, what are some implied dynamics of what God gives and does not give?]

SECTION POINT: God does not bring temptation and sin (vv.13-15), but He does bring "every good and perfect gift".

- - God sends gifts according to what He determines is best for us in light of the past, present, and future, especially during trials.
- - These gifts are given to us. This verse does not indicate whether or not they are earned by our merit. But in light of our propensity to generate our own sin (vv.13-15), this verse might be implying we do not necessarily deserve these "good and perfect" gifts from God. (i.e. 'grace' = receive undeserved favor from God; see v.4:6)
- - God wants to and perhaps even enjoys sending good gifts.
- - God gives according to His own will, not someone else's.

[Lesson Question: What does the phrase "every good and perfect gift is from above" suggest about good gifts we get from people?]

The phrase "every good and perfect gift is from above" suggests about good gifts we get from people:

- - that God orchestrates and is the ultimate source of all goodness, whether or not it comes from people;
 - - that we should look up (to God) for good things in the midst of trials. (v.2)
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[Lesson Question: What do the phrases "coming down", "heavenly lights", and "who does not change like shifting shadows" each suggest in this passage?]

SECTION POINT: Good and perfect gifts come down from the unchanging Father in heaven.

The phrase "coming down" suggests:

- - this giving is a deliberate action solely from God;
- - this giving is being accomplished according to God's providence and sovereignty;
- - this giving is being accomplished according to God's close oversight and attention to minute detail;
- - this giving is being accomplished according to God's care and concern for the well-being of everyone, even the wicked, the godless, the God-haters.

The phrase "heavenly lights":

- - suggests God's holiness, His purity, His goodness, His nature; the light of men; (see John 1:4-5,9)
- - suggests no sin or impurity or ambiguity in the Father in His giving of good and perfect gifts from above;
- - "heavenly" hints of righteous living and perfection and eternity - good gifts God desires for us humans to have - not sin, evil, and deserved death. (from vv.20,21,15)

The phrase "who does not change like shifting shadows":

- - suggests God does not waver or vacillate in His giving good gifts nor in His other actions;

- - contrasts "heavenly lights" - suggesting permanence and stationary characteristics of the presence of the Father;
 - - that God's character does not change nor is He intangible; (He is immutable)
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BIG IDEA: We should reject the false notion that God brings temptation and instead embrace the reality that God is the ultimate source of every good and perfect gift.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Do you recognize, appreciate, and give God the credit He deserves? Or instead do you blame Him for what He does not do?
 - - Do you accurately acknowledge your role and actions in life in regard to giving in to temptations and sin?
 - - Do you accurately acknowledge the part you play in regard to the giving of good and perfect gifts?
 - - Is your assessment in these areas based upon reality that God has established in Scriptures? Or instead is it based upon some erroneous "deceiving" notion cooked up and served to you on a silver platter by some smooth-talker, for example the deception that God wants you to sin because He did not give you what you think you need, or the deception that God wants your marriage to fail or end?
 - - What is your regard for what God brings and gives? Maybe it is time to change your regard to align with what God says and not to align with deceiving notions.
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary". *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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