

Sermon or Lesson: James 1:18 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: God's Best "Good And Perfect Gifts"

INTRO: When you were a child, did you ever get a gift that was really good - even incredible? What was your response, and what was your reaction to the giver? Let's suppose you were a total brat the whole previous year and you got a gift that was really good - even incredible. Now, what would be your response, and what would be your reaction to the giver?

READ: James 1:18, with verses 16-17 for context

[Lesson Question: How does verse 18 fit in with the preceding verses 13-17 of what God doesn't and does give us?]

Verse 18 cites specific examples of "good and perfect gifts" that "the Father" "gives us" "from above". (v.17)

[Lesson Question: So what exactly is it that the Father is giving us?]

SECTION POINT: The Father gives the ultimate good and perfect gift - eternal life, which is achieved through a new spiritual birth that is accomplished via His written word.

The Father gives us the good and perfect gift of:

"birth"

- "birth" = Strong's #0616 "brought forth; to breed forth, i.e. to generate (figuratively)"
- - This "birth" is a new or second spiritual birth into right relationship with God that will last eternally. (see John 3:1-21)
- - This birth is totally a gift or something given by God; the gift has cost to the giver but has no cost to the recipient. (see Ephesians 2:8-9)
- - This gift of new spiritual birth is a choice ("He chose") that God has made by His own will to give; we likewise make choices by our own will to do what we want
- - This gift of new spiritual birth is invaluable and eternal - unquestionably the best "good and perfect" (v.17) gift God gives anyone.
- - This gift regenerates us spiritually ("birth") - an action that counters the opposite effect of sin, which corrupts us spiritually. (vv.15,27;4:4)

the "word of truth"

- - The "word of truth" is written Scriptures, the Holy Bible.
- - The "word of truth" is a good and perfect gift that comes down from the Father. (v.17)
- - The "word of truth" is completely true.
- - The "word of truth" is a guidebook for how to live in a way that the Father accepts and pleases Him. (v.20; cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- - God utilizes the “word of truth” to guide us into a saving faith through which God grants us “birth” into a right relationship with Him forever, i.e. eternal life. (cf. Romans 10:17)
- - Sin from temptation brings forth or gives birth to death (v.15), which is a wrong no relationship with God that ultimately yields eternally living in separation from God and in punishment from God (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Conversely, God from the "word of truth" brings forth or "births" new life, which is a right or reconciled relationship with God that ultimately yields eternally living in the presence of God and in blissfulness of God.

“a kind of firstfruits”

“firstfruit” = Strong’s #0536 “firstfruit; a beginning of sacrifice; i.e. the (Jewish) firstfruit (figuratively)”

- - God is at work making us into “a kind of firstfruits”.
- - “Firstfruits” is a concept prevalent in the Old Testament that denotes the best of the crop - the choicest portions were always to be offered to the Lord over, above, apart from all the voluminous rest of the harvest that followed. Firstfruits were considered sacred to Him, and were to be of the best quality, most cherished. (see Exodus 23:19)
- - Old Testament “firstfruits” offerings sustained the priests, those chosen by God to lead and conducted the ministry for God. (see Deuteronomy 18:3-5)
- - God is to get the firstfruit; He is entitled to it and wants it. (see Leviticus 19:23-25)

(a kind of firstfruits) **“of all he created”**

- - God is busy giving good gifts to us and His gifts have purpose, one of which is to bear good fruit in believers’ lives - fruit that is characterized by qualities God holds sacred, such as righteous holy living, serving God and others, loving God with all our heart, and etc.
- - We believers are firstfruits, and thereby are especially valued by God and thereby honored as being the most important and pinnacle “of all He has created”.
- - God works through our trials to bring us to bear spiritual fruit and maturity. (v.4)
- - Believers are to be sanctified or set apart for God’s holy purposes - over, above, apart, different, foremost, and of best moral and spiritual quality from all the voluminous rest of the people who are not believers.
- - Believers are to be the ones leading and conducting the ministry for God.
- - Believers were bought at a (high) price by God through the giving of another best perfect gift - His Son Jesus in a sacrificial torturous death. Therefore, believers belong to God (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and are to be totally devoted to carrying out His agenda, no matter how difficult the situations, temptations, or trials they may be going through.
- - The phrase “a kind of” suggests a variation of the technical definition; i.e. not exactly the same as but very much like. Believers are a spiritual firstfruits, spiritually harvested first for God from the sea of humanity that God created - much like on a physical level the choicest grain or unblemished livestock were the physical agricultural firstfruits, physically harvested first for God from the fields of the earth that God created.

BIG IDEA: God does not give us temptations (v.13), but instead He gives us the best “good and perfect gift” (v.17) of a new spiritual birth through His word, that we believers may become the most highly valued, honored, and useful in all His creation.

APPLICATIONS:

- - From the study of this passage, do you more fully comprehend the nature and extent of our sinfulness in contrast to the nature and extent of God's goodness?
 - - Have you, officially before God, ever made the choice to become a believer (by a new spiritual birth, so to speak) or instead have you not ever made that choice and are still thinking about it?
 - - In light of this verse 18 for you who are not believers, what is your response right now to God's goodness that He is offering to you?
 - - In light of this verse 18 for you who are believers by new birth, what is your response to God's goodness that He has already given you? Are you behaving in a manner that reflects God's goodness to you? Or not?
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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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