

Perfect Gifts, Perfect Giver
James 1:17

November 25, 2012

A. Introduction

1. Text and Context – ‘Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.’ (James 1:17)

2. Exactly One Month from Today

B. Perfection of the Gifts

1. Perfect ... in the Manner Given – ‘every good gift (thing given)’

a. in a generous manner^A

b. in a suitable manner^B

c. in a timely manner^C

2. Perfect ... in Their Quality – ‘every perfect gift’

a. in the family circle^D

b. as special recipients^E

3. Perfect ... in His Presence

a. God Involved Personally^F

b. as Father, Son, Holy Spirit^G

C. Perfection of the Giver

1. Perfect ... in Our Past – ‘coming down from the Father of lights’

a. encompassing His creation

b. encompassing mankind^H

2. Perfect ... in Our Present^I

3. Perfect ... in Our Future – ‘with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.’ – it is assured!

a. what is it to be a perfect Being?

b. what is the assurance from this?^J

D. Rev. Geoff Thomas:– ‘He who made heaven can make a heaven for us, and make us fit for heaven. He who made the lights can enlighten us while we are on earth, and so energize us that our lights shine before men. The lights of the heavens have become symbols of our joy that their Maker is our Saviour, and He has promised to join us one day with all the people

^A Ephesians 1:7-8, 1 Timothy 6:17

^B Matthew 11:28, Romans 6:23, 8:1

^C Psalm 34:6

^D John 1:12

^E Romans 8:17, 1 Peter 1:3-4

^F 2 Corinthians 8:3-5

^G John 3:16, 1 John 4:10, John 15:13-14, Romans 5:5

^H Acts 17:28, 14:17, Psalm 19:1-4, Psalm 24:1

^I Psalm 23:1, Ephesians 5:8

^J Psalm 23:6

of God in His presence, and they will be a company as numerous as those
lights themselves.'

A. Introduction—{2}.

1. Text and Context

- a. the epistle of James, in its first chapter
- b. has been addressing the matter of trials and temptations
- c. the particular lesson of verses 13-15 is that temptation has its source in the lusts of our fallen human nature, and in no sense is it in God
- d. then verse 16 looks both backward and forward, saying,
- e. **'Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.'**
- f. backward: that we will not be deceived into thinking that some idea which is obviously evil, is being put into our minds by God to do
- g. forward to our text today: lest we should have a false idea about God
- h. **'Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.'** – God cannot tempt because He is the Giver of good gifts

2. Exactly One Month from Today

- a. Christmas will be here
- b. the busy shopping season has begun
 - (A) to the delight of many merchants
 - (B) and the despair of many parents
 - (C) because there is so much emphasis on the presents
 - (D) whatever shall we get for uncle Jacob and aunt Verna? – we must give them something even though we haven't heard from them (or, thought of them, if truth be known) for almost a year
- c. for others, we spend a lot of time trying to discover the perfect gift—{3}.
 - (A) we carefully wrap it, only to see little Susie or young Jamie tear the wrapping off in a few seconds
 - (B) and, in a short while, having opened all their presents
 - (C) sit surrounded with gifts looking forlorn and sad; it's all over!
 - (D) in a few brief moments all anticipated happiness has slipped away

- d. we grab so hungrily at fleeting experiences
 - (A) the things man's skill in arts and technology provide
 - (B) but when we have tasted them all, with their gaudy packaging and alluring advertising, we sense only unfulfilled promises
- e. which is all too often the case with the gifts we give and receive
- f. but that is not the case with God
- g. for He is the perfect Giver; He gives perfect gifts
- h. if you were to read only the first 16 verses of James chapter one,
 - (A) you might be left with the feeling that all the Christian has to look forward to is one long series of uninterrupted hardships and trials
 - (B) but that would be a distortion of the truth
 - (C) a deception that Satan would be glad to tempt you to think
 - (D) so it is good for us to come to verse 17 today to reveal that lie for what it is, a denial of the goodness of our heavenly Father

B. Perfection of the Gifts

1. Perfect ... in the Manner Given – 'every good gift'

- a. there are in this verse two words which can both be translated 'gift'
- b. the first of these, 'every good gift,' which the NASB translates as 'thing given' has an emphasis upon the act of giving, the manner given, the way in which ownership is transferred from the God the Giver to us
- c. the manner in which it is given shows the goodness of the Giver
 - (A) His gifts are generous
 - (B) His gifts are suitable
 - (C) His gifts are timely
- d. God gives in a generous manner
 - (A) 'In Him (that is, Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. ...' (Ephesians 1:7-8)
 - (B) material possessions often just bring worry and care, yet for those in Christ, they should be immaterial (!); as Paul tells Timothy to 'Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to

be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.' (1 Timothy 6:17)

e. God gives in a suitable manner

(A) remember the difficulty of picking out that one special present?

(B) God always knows just the thing we really need

(C) and he meets with us and gives

(D) not all our desires; but all our needs

(E) not every prayer for prosperity, but by His wise criteria lavishing upon us the best gifts.—^{4}.

(F) we strive for satisfaction, for fulfilment, for contentment

(1) these things are not found in possessions

(2) these things are not found in the trinkets of technology

(3) rather, these are to be found in the free gift of Jesus Christ who said, 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28)

(G) psychiatrists have outlawed as a diagnosis the guilt of sin, yet guilt by its reality obsesses the human heart – only God can give the perfect forgiveness the disposes of guilt:

(1) 'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 6:23)

(2) 'Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.' (Romans 8:1)

f. God gives in a timely manner

(A) 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him And saved him out of all his troubles.' (Psalms 34:6)
– when does God give?

(1) when we cry, 'O Lord, hold me!'

(2) when we call, 'Lord, keep my heart from breaking!'

(3) when we ask, 'God, keep me patient, or content, or courageous, or unselfish, or forgiving.'—^{5}.

(B) those are great needs and when our need is great, God gives

(C) on January 21st, 2005, the Inaugural Prayer Service for George W. Bush's second term of office took place. An unrehearsed event was captured by the cameras when the offering was taken up. The new president was evidently unprepared – that's happened to most of us. What the cameras recorded was the hand of former president George Bush, Sr., slipping over the pew giving his son

some money to put in the offering plate.^{-(6)}} Just at the time most needed, his father gave it to him. Just when our need is greatest, our heavenly Father gives to us.

2. Perfect ... in their Quality – ‘every perfect gift’

- a. the second word in this verse that can be translated ‘gift’ places the emphasis on the quality of what is being given
- b. it is a mistake, I think, to distinguish these two words, as some do, into first the physical gifts and secondly, the spiritual gifts
- c. but there is no denying that this second word has an eternal aspect about it, which is brought out by that word perfect – meaning entire, full or complete – as well as by what follows in the verse
- d. the most precious gift-giving at Christmas is that which takes place in the family circle; in the intimacy of family relationships
- e. no wonder then that God’s perfect gifts take place in His family circle: ‘But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name’ (John 1:12)
- f. it is by becoming part of that family circle through faith that we become the special objects of God’s giving
- g. that is Paul’s message in Romans 8:17, ‘and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.’ (Romans 8:17)
- h. and Peter’s in 1 Peter 1:3-4, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again ... to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,’
- i. and that family circle is complete, made ...

3. Perfect ... in His Presence

- a. why are the gifts of God perfect? ... because God involves Himself
 - (A) it is the involvement of the giver with the gift that makes it special
 - (B) this is what so moved Paul about the Macedonian Christians: ‘For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ... and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.’ (2 Corinthians 8:3-5)

- (C) there is many a man who has lavished gifts upon his wife only to discover – and often too late – her real desire was for him
- (D) there are many parents who have doted upon children, showering them with gifts, only to find out that what the child most desired was time with mom and time with dad
- b. but God never makes a mistakes, and certainly not that mistake: the Triune God involves Himself in the life of His children
 - (A) 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.' (John 3:16)
 - (B) 'In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' (1 John 4:10)
 - (C) Jesus said, 'Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.' (John 15:13-14); and not only is God the Son given to us,
 - (D) but also the Holy Spirit: '... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.' (Romans 5:5)
- c. it is because God accompanies His gifts to His children that they are thereby made most perfect – more about this in weeks to come.

C. Perfection of the Giver

1. Perfect ... in Our Past – 'coming down from the Father of lights'
 - a. God's gifts are not limited to His children by faith
 - b. the God who said, 'let there be light and there was light', the Creator of the heavens and the earth, has a special relation to His creation
 - c. He is the Father of lights, the lights that are given to all men alike, to provide sight and to provide for man's physical needs
 - d. so, even before a person trusts in Christ, God gives
 - e. so Paul could say on Mars Hill to the philosophers there, 'for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, "For we also are His children."' (Acts 17:28)
 - f. and in another message, 'and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave

you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.' (Acts 14:17)

- g. all His universe declares the perfection of God
- h. all His provision for His creatures proclaims the perfection of God
- i. this is true for the unbeliever (which all of us have been in our past) and the believer alike

2. Perfect ... in Our Present

- a. but for the believer, the perfection of God the Giver is a present reality
- b. Dan Henderson brought this truth out last Sunday from that 23rd Psalm: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'
- c. for God is not only the Father of lights – physical sun and stars
- d. but He is our Father in a more intimate, family way, than He is to the rest of His creation
- e. 'for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light' (Ephesians 5:8)
- f. and because of this we can recognize the perfection of the Giver

3. Perfect ... in Our Future – 'with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow (or, shadow of turning).'

- a. the lights that God created change; the moon has its phases; the sun pulses with its light it puts varying up and down – with the sun and stars there is variation, shifting shadow – but not with God.
- b. what is it to be a Perfect Being? We cannot comprehend it
- c. one mark of God's perfection is that He does not change
 - (A) the nature of His being is always the same
 - (B) His attributes – His character – is always the same
- d. Arthur Pink writes, 'He cannot change for the better, for he is already perfect; and being perfect, he cannot change for the worse. Altogether unaffected by anything outside himself, improvement or deterioration is impossible. He is perpetually the same. He only can say, "I am that I am". He is altogether uninfluenced by the flight of time. There is no wrinkle upon the brow of eternity. So his power can never diminish nor his glory ever fade.' –{7}.
- e. and it is that truth that bodes well for us as believers, because this means that we can ever trust in Him – what He has been, what He now is to us, is what He ever will be.

- f. we can sing with David, 'Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.' (Psalms 23:6)
- g. or with Thomas Chisholm^{8}.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not — Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

D. Conclusion

1. This is the great, giving God who has given to each one of us life and breath and being; considering how good and perfect He is in His Being and in His gifts, can you not trust in Him and give back to Him that life to use as He wills? Let us close by giving thanks to Him.

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 - ASV ... American Standard Version of 1901
 - AV ... Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
 - NAS ... New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
 - NIV ... New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
 - NKJV ... New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
 - WEY ... The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth
 - Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:
 - BM ... Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
 - EBC ... The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
 - EGT ... The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
 - Lange ... Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
 - NICNT ... The New International Commentary on the New Testament , *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
 - TYN ... Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
 - Kerux ... The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.
2. Two sermons worth reading on this text found in the Kerux database (and on the internet) are #2374, “*The Giving Father,*” by Rev. Geoff Thomas, Alfred Place Baptist Church, Abertswyth, Wales; and #12569, “*The Giver of Perfect Gifts,*” by Rev. Jack Anderson, Bethel Church, Isle of Man.

3. Some thoughts here taken from "*Finding the Perfect Gift*," by Ravi Zacharias, Kerux illustrations #8097
4. Adapted from "*The Giving Father*," as noted above
5. *ibid.*
6. Adapted from "*From His Hand to Yours*," by Ron Hutchcraft, Kerux illustrations #29344.
7. Quoted by Rev. Geoff Thomas, from "*The Attributes of God*," p.39, in sermon noted above.
8. "*Great Is Thy Faithfulness*," by Thomas Obadiah Chisholm (1866-1960).