

Argo, 7/20

## Good and Perfect

READING: James 1:2-21 (or any part thereof)

### INTRO

Turn to the book of James.

We love this book...very practical, and an easy read.

I think we get this book wrong--at least on one level--quite often.

We often think of it as a potpourri, but we need to look closer, because when you do, you'll see themes threaded throughout, which will certainly explain and enhance the already beloved teachings of James.

Take v. 17 for example--a verse with which we're very familiar..

- '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. '
- Preceded by "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."
- Followed by "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;"

Three practically unrelated points? I don't think so.

### PRAYER

The theme of James 1 could be the comparison of that which is of God to that which is of Man.

Look...

- V. 2, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,
  - As we've talked about many times, this is something of a paradox.
  - It's confusing.
  - How can I be expected to have joy in trial?
- V. 3, "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.
  - Although the trials that we face are NOT of God,
  - We can be joyful knowing that there is something better to come...
- V. 4, "And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
  - The "full effect" of steadfastness--the byproduct of our trials--is our being "perfect and complete."
  - NOTE: "perfect" also to be used in v. 17.
  - So, this effect of completion is of God, whereas trials are of Man.
  - James further makes this point with...
- V. 5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. '
  - God gives "good and perfect gifts" to those who ask without doubting.
  - The second example of these types of gifts: wisdom.
  - We need to start seeing a pattern of what gifts are considered "good and perfect."

- “Good”
          - There are certainly things of Man that are considered good by modern cultural standards.
          - Note what Jesus himself said in Luke 18:19 [pick up in v. 18], “a ruler asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.’”
          - This man recognized Jesus “goodness.”
          - Yet Jesus says, “No one is good except God alone.”
          - We need to recognize how the Spirit uses vocabulary, and at least use the same when studying the Bible.
        - “Perfect”
          - Again, this word has different modern connotations than what I believe is intended here.
          - Rom. 3:23, “all have sinned,” i.e. no one is perfect.
          - Colossians 1:28, 'Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone [perfect and complete] in Christ. '
          - The Spirit doesn't mean “flawless” by saying “perfect;” He means “complete.”
            - So true goodness and perfection are of God.
- So that pattern I mentioned shows that “good and perfect” gifts are of God, and not of Man.
- V. 9, 'Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, 10a, and the rich in his humiliation,
  - Two more paradoxes...
    - The “lowly” being exalted??
    - The “rich” being humiliated??
  - See, things that are of God aren't always clearly seen.
  - Why?
- 10b, “because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. 11, For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.”
  - Another example of that which worldly culture suggests as “good”--earthly riches.
  - Surely, it would be “good” to be “rich,” right? Not by God's standards.
    - Mk. 10:25, “easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than a rich person to enter the kingdom.”
    - Prov. 11:28, “Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.”
  - Why are riches not “good,” by the Spirit's standards?
    - Riches pass away; they fall, perish, and fade away.
    - Remember, no one is good...except God alone.
    - It is HIS gifts that are good.
      - Why?
      - Because He does NOT pass away, fall, perish, or fade away.
      - And neither do His gifts! :)

- And in V. 12, he circles back around to what he said in v. 2-3, ' Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
  - He adds another gift of God, or at the least expounds on the gifts mentioned previously, by calling this “the crown of life.”
  - And again he mentions the trials, that are brought about by Man, and not God.
  - How can we know this? He is about to explain in...
- V. 13, Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.
  - God gives gifts that are “good and perfect.”
  - This would NOT include temptation...
  - For we read here that temptation is evil.
  - Here’s another word with different spiritual meaning than we’re used to: “Evil.”
    - Mat. 7:11, If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!
    - Jesus isn’t talking to people that were considered evil by the world’s standards; He’s talking to Jews--God’s chosen race at the time.
    - And it’s interesting that here, we have these words with unique spiritual meaning--“good” & “evil”-- mentioned along with the same idea in James--of gifts; and the contrast of that which is of Man to that of God.

Now we come to that passage that *precedes* that first verse I used to illustrate themes in James.

- V. 14, ‘But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15, Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. ’
  - So this further explains *how* we are tempted by personification.
  - And it shows that which is of Man is certainly not “good and perfect.”
- And James continues in v.16, 'Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 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. 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.19, Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21, Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ’
  - And by now I hope you can start to pick out these contrasting “gifts”--of God, and of Man.
    - “Anger OF MAN”
    - Filthiness, rampant wickedness
    - “Righteousness OF GOD”
    - Meekness, implanted word, salvation of souls
  - And pertaining to earlier--why can only gifts of God be truly “good and perfect?”
    - V. 17, “with [God] there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

CONC.

What kind of gifts do you want?