

March 3, 2024 PM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
James 1:16-18 – “Gifts from Our Unchanging God”

- A. A right understanding of God’s attributes and the gifts He has given you can help you in manifold ways.
- B. According to **v1** James wrote this epistle to **“the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.”**
 - 1. This was a general epistle to all the churches. It wasn’t only for those churches of Jewish origin.
 - 2. At the closing of Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians, he wrote to the church, **“I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren” (1 Thes 5:27)**. This letter of James was to be read at worship services in all the churches in the known world.

Seek gifts from our unchanging God	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I. <u>EVERY GIFT COMES FROM GOD</u>II. <u>OUR GOD DOES NOT CHANGE</u>III. <u>YOUR REGENERATION BY THE WORD</u>
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I. EVERY GIFT COMES FROM GOD → **vv16-17**

- A. This truth that James lays out is true for both the believer and unbeliever.
 - 1. If an unbeliever has wealth, status, or the privilege of a ruling a great kingdom. That is from God’s hand.
 - a. God taught this truth in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar. → **Dan 4:10-12, vv20-22, v30**
 - b. The height of his arrogance is found in **v30**.
 - 2. This sort of sin can happen in the life of a professing Christian as well.
- B. Paul warned against becoming arrogant or regarding one’s self as superior. He said that the origin of that sin was by not realizing who is the Giver of every gift one has. → **1 Cor 4:6-7**

II. OUR GOD DOES NOT CHANGE → end of **v17**

- A. This language in **v17** is reminiscent of the beautiful, poetic language of OT wisdom literature.
 - 1. James was also influenced by the preaching of Jesus and His use of vivid illustrations.
 - a. Already in chapter 1, James used language concerning the surf of the sea, wind, the rising sun, scorching wind, withering grass and flowers.
 - b. In **v12**, James give a modern beatitude in imitation of the Christ.
 - 2. Dr. Simon Kistemaker wrote concerning God as the unchanging **“Father of lights.”**¹
- B. We can have a greater assurance of our salvation because of God’s unchanging nature.
 - 1. **Mal 3:6** **“For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”**
 - 2. If God’s love was fickle and changeable like ours, we would be in deep trouble.
 - a. God’s unchanging electing love for His people is from everlasting.
 - b. → **Eph 1:3-7**

¹ Kistemaker, Simon. *New Testament Commentary: James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*. pp. 52-53.

III. YOUR REGENERATION BY THE WORD →**v18**

A. The exercise of God's will to bring us forth speaks of the new birth or regeneration.

1. A pregnant woman brings for a child into the world
2. God brings us forth into new life in Christ by His Holy Spirit.
3. The WSC 31's description of effectual calling is really regeneration by another name:
"Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade & enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel."

B. **v18** says that we obtain this new birth "**by the word of truth.**"

1. As God's Word is preached in **Ezek 37**, dead, dry bones are brought to life.
2. WSC 89. asks this question, "*How is the word made effectual to salvation?*"
Answer: "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching, of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation."

C. How were those hearing this written epistle of James "**a kind of first fruits among His creatures**" according to **v18**?

1. The only nation that had God electing love set upon them was Israel.
 - a. **Ps 135:4** says, "**The Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession.**"
 - b. **Jn 1:11-13** "**He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² 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, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**"
2. Those who listened to and believed Christ's gospel as preached by James were the first fruits of a worldwide harvest of the gospel spreading to people of every tribe, tongue, and nation!

Review, further application, and conclusion: