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GOD, THE GOOD AND PERFECT GIVER

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 8
JAMES 1:16-17

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JAMES 1:16-17 "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Verse 16 is very poorly translated. The words "Do not err" come from "planao" and it means to be deceived, to be led astray. It is a present, passive, imperative. Now one can err and it can be voluntary or involuntary. Many people err and they don't have any idea about the significance of their action. Then many people err and understand exactly what they are doing, yet when you ask them about their action, they will make some excuse or even lie about their action. But the word "planao" means to deceive and since it is passive voice here, it means "to be deceived." So the imperative mood makes this statement really say, "Stop being deceived."

Now how can one be deceived? James is here addressing his remarks to born again people, converted people. These are people who have salvation and can't lose it.

The Devil--A Real "Con" Artist

The Devil is a real "con" artist and he will fake you right out of your edification complex. He can so deceive you that you really won't know what is going on. So this command "Stop being deceived" is really a command to be on guard, a command to learn doctrine so the Devil can't "con" you. "Stop being deceived" is exactly the same as the command to "Study to show thyself approved unto God." So here we simply see two sides of the same coin. One is negative and the other is positive. One says "Stop being deceived" and the other says "Take in Bible doctrine." This verse 16, therefore, is a special warning to the believer not to be deceived but to learn doctrine. Look at the groups of believers who are deceived.

1. The believer who is negative toward taking in Bible doctrine.
2. The believer who is possessed with the passionate desire to have happiness, no matter the cost.
3. The believer who has mental attitude sins and suffers from an emotional revolt in the soul.

Please notice that this command not to be deceived is addressed to "my beloved brethren." The word for "beloved" is "agapetos" which means one who is in union with Christ. It means being in the top circle. So beloved refers to all who are in the family of God by way of the new birth.

An Important Definition.

Please remember that there is no such thing as the brotherhood of man. There is no such thing as the fatherhood of God. We are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

GALATIANS 3:26 "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Never has a verse like this one been as important as it is right now in our mixed-up confused world. Don't be deceived by the Madison Avenue techniques. So this verse is actually saying this--"Don't get upset and become bitter and mean and vindictive because of the way things are happening in the world." Rather this passage is saying this--"Get smart--don't be deceived by all this trash and nonsense. Get right back into Bible doctrine and know the score."

Since you are in the family of God, you should be "in on things" you should be "in the know." God is your very own Father and you are his child and he wants you to know the facts and live by the facts. You are a child of God and the Holy Spirit put you "in Christ" at the moment of your salvation. So this is a great verse for believers. It is a direct command to stop being deceived beloved brethren.

The Highway Of Grace

Therefore, in this passage, James is defining the highway on which every believer ought to walk. Keep in mind that God loves the believer with exactly the same amount of love with which he loved his Son. He loves every believer with the same amount of love as he had for Paul. And that's why in this passage the believer is called "beloved." The word "brethren" is a family word and it means you are now in the family

Now I am sure you have observed that brothers and sisters are not all alike. God doesn't stamp us all from the same mold. We are all different. God doesn't do like the baker who takes a cookie cutter and cuts all the cookies exactly alike. Every individual is different. God made us that way. So don't be afraid to be you, provided you are born again. So this word is to all of us. It is the word "Stop being deceived. Stop being stupid. Learn doctrine and drive the darkness from your soul. Grow up to be the person God designed for you to be in eternity past."

JAMES 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Now we come to the positive side. James is here talking to believers who have been deceived. He has addressed these remarks to "beloved brethren." The word for "every" is "pas" and it is singular and means every single thing, every individual thing. Every good gift and every perfect gift refers to different things.

Think First of "Every good gift."

It is impossible to count the good gifts we have received in the past, are receiving right now, and will continue to receive in the future. The fact that we are alive at this moment is a gift from God. The air we breathe is a gift from God. The food we eat, the clothes we wear are all gifts from his hand. Every little thing and every big thing and all things in between the little and the big are gifts from his hand. The wise believer has come to realize that every single resource of life is from God and no one else. He is the God who has never let us down even once. He has always been faithful and will always be faithful to us. The reason you are breathing right now is proof that you have received countless thousands of gifts from God.

God pity you if you think you are a self-made man. (It reminds me of the young man who went to apply for a job in a big city bank. The young conceited student tried to make a profound impression on the banker. Among the things he said to the banker was, "And I would like for you to know, Sir, that I have come up the hard way. I am a self-made man." And the banker looked at him for a few moments and said, "Young man, I accept your apology.") You and I do not deserve what we are or what we have. By the grace of God we possess our freedom for which we didn't pay. We eat the food we didn't produce. We are benefactors of all that the great men and women of the past have done to make our world what it is today.

Therefore, we are right where we are today because of the grace of God. Every good and perfect gift in life is from the source of God. So we don't have what we have today because of what we have done, but because of what God is and because of what he has done in our behalf. So the "Stop being deceived" goes with this verse 17. "Stop being deceived, for every good gift and every perfect gift is from the source of God." The word for good is "agathos" and it refers to a certain category of gifts. It means good of intrinsic value. Usually this word refers to divine good. Have you noticed that God doesn't cut off your food supply just because you are carnal? You don't turn purple and fall over in death just because you commit a sin. The word for gift here is "dosis" and it means the act of giving. God is the giver and he gives on the basis of his character.

Illustration

Gold has intrinsic value. It is always the same, no matter where you find it. Anywhere in the world you find gold, it has intrinsic value. Now the same is true with the "good gift."

God does not stop giving to you just because you have failed him. All of us have failed him at some time in the past yet God just kept right on caring for us and providing for us. God gives to us on the basis of his character and not on the basis of our character. God has never once in your life given you anything on the basis of what you are or on the basis of what you have done. When you get to the place where you think you have earned something from God, you are deceiving yourself. Every gift from God is a good gift. The reason for this is that God is perfect in character. He doesn't have any other kind of gifts to give. God's gifts are exactly like gold--they are of intrinsic value. When God gives you a job, or a home, or food, or anything, it is always a perfect gift.

Now remember this--you and I can distort what he gives. But even when we distort his gifts, from his standpoint, it is still a perfect gift. You are a part of God's family and God always provides for members of his family. God can never be anything but faithful to one of his children. When we get down to the end of this verse, it is going to say, "No variableness, neither shadow of turning." Even gold in a leper's hand is just as valuable as gold in the hand of a sweet innocent child. God's golden gifts are of perfect everlasting value.

Then this verse says "Every perfect gift." Many think this refers to Christ. Indeed Christ is a perfect gift, but that is not the reference here. Christ is called "The unspeakable gift."

2 CORINTHIANS 9:15 "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Now this refers to Christ. Christ is indeed God's perfect gift to the world.

But this passage refers to the perfect gift and we may or we may not receive it.

Look for a moment at these great gifts from God.

1. God's gift of salvation.
JOHN 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
2. The presence of Christ with his people is God's unspeakable gift in the passage just noted above in 2 Corinthians 9:15.

3. The gift of eternal life.

ROMANS 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But the "perfect gift" here in our passage refers to God's provision for us. The word is "pas" and it is a nominative, singular neuter and it doesn't apply to Christ. So the word is "peleios" and it means "completed gift." This is the gift built on all other gifts. It means salvation, plus God's grace day by day and it all adds up to "the perfect gift." God gives and gives and gives and in the combination of all of it, James calls it "the perfect gift." The word for good gift is "dosis" but the word for perfect gift is "dorema" and this means the house in your soul that is built out of doctrine. This is what is meant by the perfect gift.

1. At salvation you received the unspeakable gift.
2. In every day living we receive the "agathos gifts" the good gifts. These are both the material and the spiritual gifts.
3. Then one day we receive the "completed gift" and this is the edification complex in the soul. This is the perfect gift, the completed gift.

This verse goes on to say, "This perfect gift is from above" and the word is "anothen" and is an adverb and it means "from a higher place." Jesus said to Nicodemus. You must be born anothen, from a higher place. These gifts are in his great storehouse and he just keeps on giving them to us.

"And cometh down" is a present, active, participle of "katabaino" and it means "to descend." Therefore, this verse says these gifts just keep on descending on us from God. Food, shelter, friends, love, knowledge, etc. They just fall on us day after day and this is from God. Some gifts are direct and some are indirect.

Therefore this study tonight says this--Decide now if you want to be one to receive all these gifts from God. You can go on in your blind, stupid, selfish way and miss all these things. But if you open your mind to truth and store up doctrine in your soul, then you are getting ready to be able to receive the gifts God wants to bestow on you.

Which will it be?

Which is it going to be for you? Are you going to live on your resources or on God's resources? Are you going to be a sucker and be stupid and try to get along on your resources, or are you going to shift gears and get into the overdrive of his love and power?

So this verse correctly translated says this--

"Stop being deceived, since you are a born again child in the family of God. For every single good thing you get is a gift from God, and then you one day will receive the perfect gift, the completed gift which comes to you from above from the Father of lights, who never changes and never turns away from providing for you."

God indeed is a great giver!