

Series: James
Title: "God is Good"
Text: James 1:14-18
Time: 10/16/2010 (a.m.)

Introduction

1. I remember when I was called into ministry and the excitement I felt about God placing a call on my life to preach the gospel and be a shepherd to His people. It has been a fascinating journey.

2. There have been times though when I have been overwhelmed by my own inadequacies and mistakes, the scope of the task, the harshness of others, or as the apostle Paul describes as "the pressure of concern for the church."

3. It is in this pressure of concern that I often battle doubt and have to fight the battle to see God's call on my life as a good thing that He has given me and not a curse designed to frustrate me.

4. Some of the readers of James' letter were having similar thoughts. Their miserable flight from Jerusalem and the ongoing persecution as Christians at the hands of fellow Jews had left them not only saying, "God is tempting me" (v. 13), but mouthing the parallel logic that God is not good.

5. The battle to doubt God's goodness in the face of adversity is not limited to the book of James; let's look at Old Testament and New Testament examples:

- Although it was Satan that directly attacked the godly Job, clearly he did it with God's full permission. When Job's wife told him to curse God and die, Job wisely answered (**Job 2:10**), "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"
- The apostle Paul came to see that his thorn in the flesh was a cause for rejoicing, because it kept him in humble dependence on God (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**). So the "good gifts" that God sends may include extremely difficult trials.

6. In these verses, James lays out the truth that the goodness of God is not just something to say but a defense against deception and a provision of hope in the midst of adversity.

1. The Deception of Evil

1. In verse 16 we see an admonishment, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."

2. No temptation appears as temptation; it always seems more alluring than it really is. James used two illustrations from the world of sports to prove his point.

- *Drawn away* carries with it the idea of the baiting of a trap; and *enticed* in the original Greek means "to bait a hook." The hunter and the fisherman have to use bait to attract and catch their prey. No animal is deliberately going to step into a trap and no fish will knowingly bite at a naked hook. The idea is to *hide* the trap and the hook.

3. Temptation always carries with it some bait that appeals to our natural desires. The bait not only attracts us, but it also hides the fact that yielding to the desire will eventually bring sorrow and punishment. It is the bait that is the exciting thing.

4. In the deception of evil what you see and feel is not what you get.

5. When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He always dealt with the temptation on the basis of the Word of God. Three times He said, "It is written." From the human point of view, turning stones into bread to satisfy hunger is a sensible thing to do; but not from God's point of view.

6. When you know the Bible, you can detect the bait and deal with it decisively. This is what it means to walk by faith and not by sight.

7. Whenever you are faced with temptation, get your eyes off the bait and look ahead to see the consequences of sin: *the judgment of God*. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

2. Consider God's Goodness

1. One of the enemy's tricks is to convince us that our Father is holding out on us, that He does not really love us and care for us. When Satan approached Eve, he suggested that if God really loved her, He would permit her to eat of the forbidden tree. When Satan tempted Jesus, he raised the question of hunger. "If Your Father loves You, why are You hungry?"

2. The goodness of God is a great barrier against yielding to temptation. Since God is good, we do not need any other person (including Satan) to meet our needs. It is better to be hungry *in* the will of God than full *outside* the will of God.

3. Once we start to doubt God's goodness, we will be attracted to Satan's offers; and the natural desires within will reach out for his bait.

4. **God gives only good gifts.** Everything good in this world comes from God. If it did not come from God, it is not good. If it comes from God, it must be good, even if we do not see the goodness in it immediately.

5. **The way God gives is good.** We can translate the second clause "and every act of giving." It is possible for someone to give us a gift in a manner that is less than loving. The value of a gift can be diminished by the way it is given to us. But when God gives us a blessing, He does it in a loving, gracious manner. *What* He gives and *how* He gives are both good.

6. **He gives constantly.** "Cometh down" is a present participle: "it keeps on coming down." God does not give occasionally; He gives constantly. Even when we do not see His gifts, He is sending them. How do we know this? Because He tells us so and we believe His Word.

7. **God does not change.** There are no shadows with the Father of Lights. It is impossible for God to change. He cannot change for the worse because He is holy; He cannot change for the better because He is already perfect.

8. If King David had remembered the goodness of the Lord, he would not have taken Bathsheba and committed those terrible sins.

2 Samuel 12:7–8, Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. ‘I also gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

9. Contrast David with Joseph, **Genesis 39:7–9**, It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”

10. God’s gifts are always better than Satan’s bargains. Satan never gives any gifts, because you end up *paying for them dearly*.

Proverbs 10:22 It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it.

11. The next time you are tempted, meditate on the goodness of God in your life. If you think you need something, wait on the Lord to provide it. Never toy with the devil’s bait.

3. Consider the Gift of Salvation

1. We are “a kind of firstfruits of His creatures,” James wrote to Jewish believers, and the word *firstfruits* would be meaningful to them.

2. Of all the creatures God has in this universe, Christians are the very highest and the finest! We share God’s nature. For this reason, it is beneath our dignity to accept Satan’s bait or to desire sinful things. A higher birth must mean a higher life.