

The Greatest Gift of All

James 1:17-18

INTRODUCTION: God is good all the time. All the time, God is good.

How easy those sentences are to say, while at times, they are so very hard to remember or to believe.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, who only believed that Jesus was truly the Messiah after the risen Christ appeared to him following His resurrection, this transformed skeptic knew about hardships and trials. He began his book saying,

James 1:2-4 2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Knowing that we all have difficult times in our lives, James reminds us of this attribute of the Almighty that is so personally comforting to us who are His children: God is good!

There are other attributes of God that produce ambivalent emotions, a mixture of thoughts.

- I am glad that God is holy when I am on the righteous side of things, but when sin has crept back into my life, the holiness of God rightfully causes me to fear.
- I am glad that God is all knowing except when I am harboring secret sin in my life.
- I am thrilled to know that God is all powerful as long as I am joining Him in His work. But if I am engaged in something not of His will, this characteristic of God causes me to fear and tremble.

But there is never a time when I am not glad that God in the very essence of Who He Is is good! God is good all the time. And all the time, God is good. And I am always glad for that.

But I do not always remember that. Even Tuesday night, it was not the first thing to come to mind.

- Karen had told me I needed to look at the floor of a little office area in our house. A little over a month ago, one of those torrential rains caused water to build up and run under the wood flooring in the corner of the office. I fixed the source of the problem with a piece of guttering and tore out the damaged wood and put fans drying out the concrete. I had laid the floor myself seven years ago and I had just enough left over to fix the damage. So not wanting to leave the mess

while I went to Brazil, I hurried and did the repair and finished the night before I left for Brazil. It looked great, like it never happened.

When I looked at it Tuesday night, I realized immediately, I should not have rushed the drying of the concrete. Two places showed that there was still residual moisture and two new spots of damage showed up.

I am just confessing – the goodness of God was not my first thought.

- I am a slow learner. While still really sad about the floor, I started tackling my project for the night. I had a wall on which I was installing some click lock siding. My plan was to work until about 9, then relax for an hour and go to bed. And I made really great progress. A few minutes after 9, I got to a good stopping point, stepped back to admire the new look of the wall, and said, “Oh no!”

I realized that in my haste to hang board after board, I covered a wall outlet. I guess you figured it out by now. My next thought was not about the goodness of God. But it should have been, and it was before long; it just should have come more quickly. I removed all the siding until I got back down to the outlet, cut it out of the board that covered it, put it back, reinstalled the other twenty pieces I had to remove to get back to the problem and went to bed at 11:30.

God is good, all the time!

I still don't know what I am going to do about the floor, but God is good. And God is good all the time.

So, James reminds us. I need to be reminded. Do you need to be reminded?

James 1:17–18 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Our always good God gives good gifts. Those gifts are good, not just in value, but as the word implies in moral quality. And they are perfect, which means that they are given to accomplish God's good purpose.

And this good God who created all the heavenly bodies, including those that give light, does His gift giving more steadily than these heavenly lights shine their light upon the earth. For their light varies with the conditions of the atmosphere, and their light is dimmed sometimes by objects casting shadows.

But not God. He is always good. His gifts are always good and purposeful. Every good thing that we have, every good thing that has or will happen in our lives, is a gift from God.

Then, in verse 18 James talks about God's greatest gift. (Re-read vs. 18.)

I. GOD'S GREATEST GIFT IS THE GIFT OF HIMSELF AS JESUS, THE CHRIST.

THE GREATEST GIFT OF GOD THE FATHER WAS TO GIVE GOD THE SON AS THE SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS.

James tells us that this great gift which made possible our salvation was the result of God's own will. Through the word of truth, which in Ephesians, Paul identifies as the gospel (Eph. 1:13). He tells the Jews of the dispersion who have trusted in Christ that God made them to be some of the firstfruits of all of those He would save by grace through faith.

Why is the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross the greatest gift God ever gave?

- Because this gift allows people to receive eternal life rather than eternal condemnation through faith in Christ. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Because the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross purchased our redemption. We were slaves to sin, but the shed blood of Jesus Christ sets us free.
- Because Jesus' death for our sins upon the cross made it possible for us to be adopted into God's forever family and to in fact become the children of God.
- Only through what Jesus did for us upon the cross do we have peace.
- Only through the cross do we have hope.
- Only through the cross do we have rest and joy.

And that is why Jesus gave us two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

An ordinance is a practice that carries spiritual significance.

In baptism, a new believer is testifying that they have died to the old life of sin and been raised by God to walk in newness of life through faith in Christ.

In the Lord's Supper, we remember Jesus' sacrificial death upon the cross.

So, this morning, we are going to take time to remember our always good God who gives good and perfect gifts and the greatest gift He has ever given by participating in the Lord's Supper. If you have trusted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior and you desire to join us in this remembrance of Him, we invite you to do so.

REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S GREATEST GIFT BY PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

A. First we make Preparation

1 Corinthians 11:27–28 27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

We avoid taking the bread and cup in an unworthy manner by

1. Being thoughtful about what Jesus did on the cross.
 - Think about the difference Jesus and His death upon the cross makes in your own life.
 - Think about your forgiveness, redemption, your salvation.
 - Think about the peace, the joy, the hope His sacrifice has brought to you.
2. Repenting of and confessing sin – not trying to remember Jesus and the cross but at the same time clinging to sin in our lives.

B. Participation

1. Bread – unleavened – Jesus without sin

Jesus took the bread and gave thanks.

“This is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

2. Cup – pictures for us the blood of Jesus shed upon the cross for our sins. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.

Jesus gave thanks for the cup.

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, in remembrance of Me.”

II. GOD’S GREATEST GIFT SHOULD BRING A PERPETUAL RESPONSE FROM BELIEVERS.

A. Faith during the tough times

B. Faithfulness

1. Personal and corporate worship
2. Bible reading and study
3. Assembling as a church to promote love and good works among each other

4. In giving to the Lord
5. In service in the Kingdom of Christ

C. Unending gratitude

D. Regular prayer

1. Praise
2. Thanksgiving
3. Confession
4. Petition
5. Intercession

E. Steadfast obedience

CONCLUSION: God IS good, all the time. Every good gift comes from Him. Let's remember His goodness and be alert for the gifts that come from above. And let's be a thankful people. Let's demonstrate our gratitude through faith and faithfulness day after day.