

A FAITH THAT WORKS

(A Study of the Book of James)

God's Greatest Gift – His Greatest Purpose

TEXT: James 1:18

INTRODUCTION: Last week we were reminded that

James 1:17 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.

I hope that you have as I have, spent time contemplating the multitude of good gifts from God, and following that have spent additional time offering our good and gracious God praise for Who He is and heart-felt thanks for what He has done.

The next verse in the Book of James is a natural follow up on remembering the good gifts of God. It is a statement about God's greatest gift.

James 1:18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

The profound meaning of this single sentence becomes clear if we break it into three clauses.

- **Of His own will He brought us forth.**
- **He brought us forth by the word of truth.**
- **He brought us forth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**

Let's take them one at a time.

Of His own will He brought us forth.

“Brought us forth” is the language of childbirth.

- Remember that it was said of Mary, “She brought forth her first born Son and laid Him in a manger.”
- Only **James is not talking about physical birth. He is talking about the spiritual birth – being born again.**
- He is talking about what Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus when Jesus told him, “You must be born again.”
- What is translated “born again” actually had two meanings, both of which are valid.

- **Being born a second time**
- **Being born from above**

So, “**Of His own will He brought us forth.**” Simply means

I. IT IS GOD WHO CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN.

A. The emphasis here is the initiative of God. God took the initiative to bring each one of us who is saved to the point of being saved.

B. Admittedly, **we often emphasize the response of man.**

- We plead for men to come to Christ, saying
 - If you will only believe
 - If you will only trust in Christ
 - If you will only accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior
- And it sounds as if it all depends on you or on us.
- **The reason for that is because God has already done** or is already doing **His part**, which is the larger part, **of salvation.**
 - **God chose to provide salvation** to people who would sin against Him.
 - **God designed a way for that salvation** to be provided that would not be a violation of His own holiness and righteousness.
 - This way God designed is through Christ’s death upon the cross.
 - It is an ingenious way for the perfect Son of God to take the place of each and every sinner.
 - **God sent His Son** to bear our sin on the cross.
 - **God raised Jesus from the dead.**
 - **God sent the Holy Spirit to convict men** of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - **God gives sufficient faith to a person** for them to believe in and trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

All of this, God has already done for each of us here today who have been saved.

For you who are not saved, God has done all this and at this moment the final two things are happening:

- The Holy Spirit is convicting and convincing you.
- God is granting you sufficient faith to believe.

The part that remains is small by comparison. You must simply use the faith God has provided.

- That is not to say that your part is unimportant.
- You cannot be saved if you do not use the faith God is granting you to trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior.

- If your father had spent his life leaving you an inheritance in the bank of \$100 million dollars,
- You could still starve to death if you refused to spend any of it.

What James wants us to see, what God wants us to see, is that our salvation, our being born again, born from above, is something that God decided to do, it was by His own will, His initiative, and God has been working on this since before time began.

- For those of us who are already saved, let us be ever and eternally grateful for what our kind and merciful God has done to cause our sin to be forgiven and for us to live with Him for eternity.
- For you whom God is drawing to put your faith in Christ today, understand what God has done to give you this opportunity for a new start, being born again, this time from above, having all the things of which you are guilty wiped away, being granted as a gift of grace a home with Christ for eternity, and a transformation of life here and now.
 - See what God has done
 - and use the faith God has given you to believe today in Christ.

“Of His own will He brought us forth.” means **IT IS GOD WHO CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN.**

Next, God tells us how He provided that salvation.

He brought us forth by the word of truth. Which means

II. GOD CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

What is the gospel? 3 Sentences

- 1. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died on the cross for our sins.**
- 2. Jesus rose from the dead.**
- 3. God offers forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life to all who trust Jesus as their Savior and Lord.**

Actually, when James writes, “God brought us forth by the word of truth,” he is also giving a double meaning, just like born again means a second birth and a birth from above.

The Word of Truth is a direct reference to Jesus Christ Himself.

- John the apostle called Jesus The Word.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- Jesus said, John 14:6 ... “I am the way, the truth, and the life...

GOD CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

- Salvation is in a Person.
- Salvation is in the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Salvation is not just believing a message.
- Salvation is not just acknowledging truth.

When James says, “He brought us forth by the word of truth,” which means **GOD CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN THROUGH THE GOSPEL,** he is saying that we must do the gospel message, not just believe its contents are true.

1. Yes we believe **Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died on the cross for our sins.**
2. Yes we are convinced in mind and heart that **Jesus rose from the dead.**
3. But we not only believe, we act upon the fact that **God offers forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life to all who trust Jesus as their Savior and Lord.** We put our trust in Jesus and invite Him to become the Master and Lord of our lives.

And when we do, GOD CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN!

And then the Spirit says,

He brought us forth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. Which means,

III. WE ARE BORN AGAIN FOR GOD’S PURPOSE.

- A. To belong to God** – The firstfruits were the first part of the harvest to appear on the crop, and they were considered as belonging to God personally.

Wow! God decided before eternity began that He wanted me to belong to Him.

God decided before eternity began that He wanted you to belong to Him.

But that is not all. The firstfruits belonging to God was a symbol that the whole harvest belonged to God.

- That He was the one who made the plants and the soil that held them.
- He was the one who sent the sunshine and the rain.
- He was the one that caused them to produce their fruit.
- Therefore it rightfully ALL belonged to Him.

So we are the firstfruits of the Harvest of God,

- brought about by God's intentional decision to provide salvation,
- by Jesus' incredible sacrifice for us on the cross,
- by God's persistent drawing us to Himself through the conviction of the Holy Spirit,

But God wants and deserves the whole harvest. And thus God's purpose is not just to save us. God wants people all over the world saved. It is God's intent and purpose that one day before the throne will be people of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation singing the praises of the Lamb of God and giving glory to the Almighty One.

That is God's purpose for us. That is a part of why He has given us His greatest gift, that we might in turn share it with others whom He loves just as He loves us.

WE ARE BORN AGAIN FOR GOD'S PURPOSE.

To belong to God, but also

B. To bring in the rest of the harvest.

That is why to those of us who are saved, Jesus said,

Matthew 28:19–20 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

And

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

God wants us to belong to Him and help bring in others to belong to Him also.

In giving us the Lord's Supper, Jesus left us a visual reminder of what He has done for us so that we can be forgiven, belong to God, and live with Him forever.

But this visual remembrance also reminds us of the message we must go everywhere telling those who have not yet believed.

- Across the street, not only at The Center of Hope, but across your street and mine to people everywhere here in Bay County.
- To our Judea and Samaria, from Baltimore, to Washington State.
- To Mexico, Brazil, West Africa, India, and to the very end of the earth.

Of God's own will He brought us forth through the broken body of Jesus Christ. Eat this in remembrance of Him.

He brought us forth by the word of truth, through the shedding of the blood of Jesus upon the cross. Drink this in remembrance of Him.

PRAYER – Father, grant that some today who have not yet been born again, grant that they would respond with the faith You have giving them, trusting Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Lord, if it would please You, add to our body those who want to join with our church in taking the glorious message of the gospel across the street and around the world.