

GOD'S GIFTS

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" (James 1:17).

In turning through the Word of God you will be amazed when you notice the things which we daily take for granted that are gifts from God. In reality there isn't anything that is not a gift from God. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). There isn't anything that you possess that does not come from God. Frequently we sing: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," but I wonder if we fully realize the truth of what we are singing--that all things come from God.

Everything that is good, and everything that is perfect, comes from our Father above. Our text gives us an unusually lucid statement about the character of God. First, it pictures God as a wonderfully beneficent Father. God is not the author of evil in our lives. God is not to be blamed for our irresponsible actions. It is utterly impossible for Him to act towards us with an evil intent. God's actions and intentions toward us are always good. When we think of all the good things that are ours, we are to acknowledge Him as their source. It is these personal gifts, which we often take for granted, that come from God. The contentment of a full and happy life comes only from His love, and He alone can give to us the ability to work and earn a livelihood.

If I were to ask the question, "What are the best things in life?", I would receive various answers. Some would say that money is the best thing. Others would say that education is the best thing. Others would say that good health is the best thing. Still others would say that love surpasses everything else.

But all of these things are fleeting. They can fade away in a moment. Not one of them can guarantee a happy life. Every blessing that is ours has come to us because God loved us and showered these gifts upon us.

There is a difference between "good" gifts and "perfect" gifts. James distinguishes between them. Maybe he was saying that God's material gifts were "good," while God's spiritual gifts were "perfect." Whatever his meaning, he was telling us that all of the gifts that we have received have come to us from a beneficent, all-loving heavenly Father.

I. God's Good Gifts.

1. Home.

The home is truly one of God's good gifts. I am thinking of the kind of a home that John Howard Payne immortalized when he sang:

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home."

2. Health.

Our hospitals stay full of those who are ill, and in many homes there are people who are afflicted for life. More die from heart trouble than from

any other disease. Perhaps this is due to the fact many are living so fast, because they have so many things to worry them. Yet sickness has its blessings for us, if we would only seek them. Don't waste your opportunities when you are ill. It is a time to pray, to read the Bible, to become better acquainted with God, to meditate on the goodness of God, and to think of those who have been kind to you. One of our great preachers once said, "Be careful how you suffer." Your attitude during your illness can either deny Christ or glorify Him.

3. Wisdom.

God spoke to King Solomon and said, "You can ask what you will, and I will give it unto you." Solomon might have asked for riches, or peace, or victory over his enemies, but he didn't. Instead, he asked that God would give him wisdom in order that he might be able to go in and out before the people over whom God had made him king. God was so well pleased with Solomon's request that He not only gave him wisdom, but He gave him the other things he might have asked for as well. He said, "Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee" (II Chronicles 1:12).

4. Work.

If you have a task, if you are happy in your work, be sure to thank God for it daily. It is a great blessing.

A man was buying a stagecoach ticket for a journey over the mountains. The ticket agent told him there were three classes of tickets--first, second, and third. "What's the difference?" asked the man. "You will find out later," replied the agent. The man purchased a first-class ticket and got on the stage. Later in the day when they came to a steep climb, the driver cried out, "All first-class passengers keep your seats, all second-class passengers get out and walk, all third-class passengers get out and push."

The world needs pushers today. Too many are riding free and not doing any worthwhile work. The Lord Jesus Christ was a worker. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5:17). God created the heavens and the earth, not stopping until He had finished the work. Christ Jesus worked as a carpenter, then as a preacher, a teacher, and a Great Physician. He never rested until He died. Three days after He was placed in Joseph's tomb, He rose to work again. An idler or loafer is never happy and does not make any contribution to society. It is the worker who builds. Work is a good thing and a real blessing.

5. Friends.

Some one has said that "A friend is one who knows all about you and still loves you." Another has said, "A friend is one who comes in when all the world goes out." There are not many people who live up to these definitions. One is fortunate to have two or three real friends in a lifetime. Many people may claim to be a friend, but only the real ones stand by when it costs them something.

When the martyr John Huss was on the way to the stake, an old friend rushed out of the crowd and gave him a hearty handshake, even though he knew it might cost him his life. Huss smiled his appreciation, for he knew the man had

risked his life to show his friendship. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, said, "My treasures are my friends." When Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning said to Charles Kingsley, "Tell me the secret of your life that I may make mine beautiful too," he replied, "I have a friend!" Many people have reached the pinnacle of fame, fortune, and happiness because they had a friend who helped them along the way. We can't have too many real friends. As one has said, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Emerson said, "The only way to have a friend is to be one."

II. God's Best Gifts.

Home, health, wisdom, work, and friends are certainly real blessings, but they are not the best things in life. Among the best things in life which God gives to us are:

1. Forgiveness Of Sins.

The good gifts, which I have mentioned do not amount to anything if the burden of sin is upon your heart and your soul is lost. It is tragic that so many people are giving all their time and thought and energy to this world, leaving Christ out of their lives. They are missing the best because they are ignoring Him.

2. Fellowship With God.

It is wonderful to have fellowship with others, but it is much sweeter to walk and to have fellowship with God.

When Nansen was seeking the North Pole, there came a day when he found his ship in deep water. He tried to measure the depth but his line would not reach the bottom, so he wrote in his diary, giving the length of the line and adding the words, "Deeper than that." The next day he lengthened the line, but with the same result, it would not touch the bottom. For several days this went on and the notation in his diary was always, "Deeper than that." That is like the love of God. No matter how we measure it, we must always say, "It is deeper than that." And the sweetness in fellowship in that love can never be told by human lips. The Lord Jesus Christ is our best "Friend." He understands all about us. He knows about our sins and our weaknesses, but He still loves us. We can go to Him with all our sorrows and all our joys. We can have the sweetest fellowship with Him.

3. Opportunity Of Helping Others.

Anybody who goes through the world without helping others is extremely poor. One of the greatest thrills and joys of life is to know that you have helped someone else. A lady who raised and gave flowers to other people said, "The flowers I give away never fade." The things we do for others will last forever. Service always abides.

A man in Scotland gave a sick eagle his freedom then stood at a window to watch what would happen. Soon another eagle swooped down to the ground and began to fan the sick eagle with its wings. Then he lifted the sick eagle with his pinions and flew up, up, and up into the ethereal blue. The sick eagle soon

gained strength, spread his wings and soared away. The healthy eagle brought invigoration down because he came from the upper air. And when we have been living up in the heights near God, we, too, will be able to lift up and help others.

4. Assurance Of A Home In Heaven.

This makes all of life worthwhile. When Ulysses S. Grant was a young man, he worked on a farm. As he rode along on a load of wood, he was dreaming of his future. He saw himself as a colonel, leading a regiment. He dreamed of being highly honored, applauded by the multitudes, and traveling over Europe with a beautiful wife. It seemed foolish for a poor man, riding on a load of wood, to dream like that. But all of his dreams came true. Hope causes us to dream of a beautiful, happy, wonderful life. These hopes will find fruition in heaven, where dreams will come true.

Many of us have been to the seashore and have seen the tracks made there in the sand. We have seen the holes dug by children and all sorts of scars on the beach. Then we have seen the tides coming in with a mighty rush, obliterating every scar and smoothing out the sand. This reminds us of heaven. Life is full of scars and troubles, but heaven will wash them all away. Every scar and stain will be gone. It is wonderful to have the joys of salvation here, but it will be even more glorious when, after life here is over, we shall go home to heaven.

God is the source of all good. Everything that is good and best comes from our Father above. With Him there is no variableness. He was always good and with Him is no shadow of turning. Because God is immutable or unchanging, He will always be good.

Inasmuch as God is good, and always wants to do what is best for us, we are under obligation to recognize whatever good comes from His hands. Our eyes should not be blinded when we consider the mercies of God; when we consider either His temporal or His spiritual favors to His creatures. Our eyes ought to be wide open to see these gifts in their multitude, in their magnitude, and in the preciousness of their character.

Having recognized the goodness and the graciousness of God, we should be very prompt to express the gratitude of our hearts, therefore, as beneficiaries of His bounty, as creatures dependent upon His will and as deriving even the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, and the food that we eat from Him. Our hearts ought to be filled with gratitude for the preservation of our being, the continuance of our well being, and all of the future good which shall come to us. We ought to love Him and serve Him. We ought to show our gratitude to Him by giving Him our very lives.

Pierre Hurlat was the best gunner in the French Army. He saved his money and built a home in a certain village. It was a thing of beauty, covered with honeysuckle vines, surrounded by flowers. He looked forward to the time of retirement, when he could go there to live in peace. Then came the Franco-Prussian War and the Germans took over the little village and moved into Pierre's home.

One day Pierre found himself beside his gun, on a hill overlooking that village. The general said to him, "Do you see that cottage?" The cold sweat broke out on Pierre's brow, for he knew the general was referring to the little home that he owned and prized so highly. The general said, "A nest of Germans is in that house, I want you to train your gun on it and destroy it." The obedient soldier aimed his gun with all the skill at his command. There was a roar and the cottage was demolished. "Good work,"

said the general. But as he looked at Pierre, he found that his face was covered with tears. "What's the matter?" he asked Pierre. "Ah, general," the faithful soldier replied, "That was my own house."

Pierre gave his best for the country he loved. Ought we not to give our best to Jesus Christ our Saviour, the One Whom we love? He gave his best for us. He wants us to have and to enjoy God's gifts in this life and in the next. What response are you going to make to His love which He has expressed through His gifts?