

Audio file

[Study 12 The God of All Goodness 1926gsm_james_1_v16-17.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:00

Please turn with me in the scriptures to the Epistle of James in chapter 1.

00:00:06

Turning in the scriptures this morning to the Epistle of James chapter 1 and verses 16 and 17.

00:00:14

James chapter 1 verse 16.

00:00:19

Do not err, my beloved brethren.

00:00:22

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.

00:00:28

and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no verbuleness, neither shadow of turning.

00:00:39

And this morning, with the Lord's help, we're going to look at this subject from this passage of Scripture under the title The God of All Goodness.

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The God of All Goodness.

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Now,

00:00:55

That phrase, that statement may surprise you.

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Is God good all the time?

00:01:03

Is God able to give good gifts?

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And to whom and through whom does God give his gifts?

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Notice how James addresses this subject.

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This, of course, is not a

00:01:20

A subject that he takes out of context, he's following on from his argument from the previous section.

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He says, Do not err, my beloved brethren.

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You see, how pastoral that is.

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It's not, Do not err those who are in the wrong.

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Or you Christians, it's my beloved brethren.

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Of course, James is going to expound certain truths that will make them uneasy, but it doesn't stop him loving them.

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And that's the mark of a faithful pastor.

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He has to say strong things at certain times.

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But he does it not out of hatred or out of a critical spirit, but out of love.

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First of all, his love for God,

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and secondly, his love for the people of God.

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And you see, that's so instructive.

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James says, Do not err.

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Now, those of you who are familiar with the New Testament will have heard those phrases before from our Saviour's own lips.

00:02:34

Do not err.

00:02:34

What does that mean?

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Do not be in error.

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Do not be mistaken.

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How easily we fall into mistaken ideas.

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or we even get into theological confusion.

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And James here is making a very clear statement.

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The Lord Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.

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Sadly, a lot of Christians get into difficulty, confusion, and error by not knowing the Scriptures.

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That's why our forebears

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emphasized again and again and again, not only read your Bible, but know your Bible and memorize your Bible.

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Some of us, our minds are not as strong as they used to be.

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And those of a younger generation may still be able to absorb sections of Scripture.

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And so James here says, Do not err, my beloved

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brethren.

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Why?

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Because the previous section, he argued, if you remember, that someone might say in verse 13, James 1 verse 13, Let no man say, when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God.' For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

00:04:12

In other words,

00:04:14

If you are in error over believing, or even considering that God is at the back of evil, or He's able to tempt us-- and the word temptation there, of course, speaks of spiritual temptation.

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It's not trial here.

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It's a different word.

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Sorry, it's a different emphasis.

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It's the same word, but it's got a different emphasis.

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So this is something very important.

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We should never

00:04:44

even for a moment, think that our God, the God of all grace and of all goodness and of all mercy and of all truth, can do evil.

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Why is that important?

00:05:02

We'll see in a moment.

00:05:05

the first thing I want us to consider the first point this morning is that God is the source of all goodness if you like this is a bit like an apologetics these are truth statements and I'll show you in scripture where these statements are confirmed or corroborated notice what James says in verse 17 James 1:17 every good gift

00:05:32

And every perfect gift is from above and cometh down.

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That's the direction the gifts come from.

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From the Father of lights, that's the source from whom all good things come and all good gifts come.

00:05:46

With whom there is no variableness, we'll look at that in a moment, neither shadow of turning.

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So the first thing is God is the source of all goodness.

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God is essentially

00:06:03

in His essence, in His nature, in His being good.

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The psalmist says in Psalm 818, he says that, Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endureth forever.

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In Psalm 145, verse 7, They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness.

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God's goodness is great goodness.

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And throughout the Scriptures, you'll find again and again that God is good.

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And the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 118, Because God is good, sorry, in another psalm he says, Thou art good, teach me thy statutes, or teach me thy precepts.

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Do we believe this?

00:07:24

Do we believe that our God is good to his very nature in every aspect of our God?

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The God of the Bible is a good God.

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You might be surprised why I'm emphasizing this, because you hear sometimes people saying, even in church, God is so good, He's so good to me.

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But why?

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Why do they sing this, these few lines?

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Well, the old writers help us here.

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God is identified as the only fountain of all good.

00:08:05

Another says he is the inexhaustible fountain of goodness.

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Another says that he's the source of all goodness.

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If we didn't have a good God, there would be no goodness in this world.

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That's the point.

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One famous writer puts it like this, he says,

00:08:28

God is described as good, not only originally good, but a sea of goodness, explaining all that created goodness is merely a rivulet, a small stream, or up here a barn, that small stream flowing from this divine, fine fountain of divine goodness.

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God is the source of all.

00:08:58

goodness.

00:09:00

Everything good that we see is because God is the source of that goodness.

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And He's not only good to people, He's good to His creation.

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He provides for the animals food and water and nourishment and shelter.

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We forget that

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Today, there is almost a dichotomy, a division in people's thinking between the God of all grace and the God of all goodness.

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He's the same God.

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God's goodness is not limited to human beings.

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Yet, it is only known and experienced consciously by human beings.

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And this is so important.

00:09:53

This is so important.

00:09:56

Not only is God the fountain of all goodness, but only those whom God has revealed His goodness to can experience it and be conscious of it.

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The Psalmist says, Thou art good, and doest good: teach me thy statutes.

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Another one, O mighty man, the goodness of God, endureth continually.

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Another man puts it like this, Thomas Watson.

00:10:24

He says, God's goodness and greatness meet together.

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God is essentially good in Himself and relatively good to us.

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When the psalmist says in Psalm 86, verse 5, Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, this relative goodness is nothing else but His mercy.

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Only a good God can be truly merciful.

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And you see how this builds up.

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God is the source of all goodness.

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Without a good God, there is no, absolutely no goodness in this world.

00:11:05

And that this God of all goodness can be merciful.

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Second thing, first truth was God is the source of all goodness.

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Secondly, and more significantly,

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God's goodness cannot be mixed with evil.

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God's goodness cannot be mixed with evil.

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God is not good and bad.

00:11:32

He is not a mixture of goodness and badness.

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He is not mostly good and a little bad.

00:11:39

He is all goodness.

00:11:43

The pagan gods were a mixture.

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Let me give you an example.

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Jupiter, not the planet, but the god.

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He had two golden characters.

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This was his characteristics.

00:12:00

He was both good and great, but he could not be gracious.

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Now, of course, Jupiter was just a figment of imagination of men.

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And God gives an explanation of the sinfulness and corruption of the imagination of men as evil continually.

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But you might think, well, OK, pagan gods, that's a long time ago.

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That's very current today.

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People have this notion that our God is both good and evil, or evil and good.

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But perhaps more significantly is this Eastern mysticism, this ying and yang that is really prevalent, and increasingly prevalent amongst religious people.

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And the notion is this.

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that their God, I can't say our God, but their God is both dark and light, passive and active, together form a dynamic, independent system.

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It's not even a God.

00:12:56

It's a dynamic, interdependent system.

00:13:00

Rather than good versus evil, it emphasizes that everything, notice these words, contains a seed of its opposite.

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Ah, you see now where we are.

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You see, this notion is creeping into people's ideas of our God.

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Yes, okay, he's a good God, but there's a seed of his opposite in him.

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It talks about encouraging balancing and harmony to achieve inner peace rather than, like other religions, or particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, striving for perfection.

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What is wrong with that?

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very simply, friends, that is not biblical Christianity.

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That is not sound theology.

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That is a mixture.

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And even in Christian churches, you hear this sometimes.

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You know, God is a good God, but somehow he has also a little bit of evil in him.

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Not evil, that's a bad word, but badness.

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He's not all good.

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How do you explain the evil in the world?

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Well, there is a reason for the evil in the world, and they need to go back to Genesis chapter 3, because the creation that God originally created was a good creation.

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God would not underwrite His creation by calling it watov in the original Hebrew, very good.

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Right up to that moment, everything was good.

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But when the crowning part of his creation, jigsaw, if I can put it like that, was put together and man was at the very pinnacle of it and the very center of it, it was very good.

00:14:58

These ideas, pagan gods and goddesses, and this idea that we can mix our biblical Christianity with anything is actually wrong.

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Ying and yang is much more common than you think.

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You can see it on builders' vans.

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Here's one for you.

00:15:22

Just look out.

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You'll see it on all kinds of places.

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You know what I mean?

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It looks like this circle with a black side and a white side, and within the white side there's a black dot, and within the black side there's a white dot.

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That's not Christianity.

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That shouldn't be next or near biblical Christianity.

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You see it in some signs, even on, dare I say, churches.

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They have this notion that, oh, we're welcoming everybody.

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You see it outside the various places and even at times of the year, in places of state and occasions.

00:16:09

This is common.

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This is very common.

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So the first thing was we looked at God is the source of all good.

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Let me just conclude it like this.

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Because God is perfectly and absolutely good.

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And secondly was God's goodness is not mixed.

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But I just want to summarize this.

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His will is fixed in his choice of goodness.

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God possesses all that is right and excellent and desirable.

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In some ways, that is an evangelistic approach.

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You're looking for goodness in this fallen world, then look to our God.

00:16:57

And Paul,

00:16:58

brings this home to the hearts and to the minds of the people in Rome.

00:17:04

He says in Romans 2 and verse 4, Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and the forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

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Now, just two things before we move on to our third point.

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Only and inherently good God can give good gifts.

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We'll explore that more in a moment.

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But secondly,

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Only our God is able to be gracious or good to all His creatures.

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No other God is like our God.

00:17:47

Our God is unique.

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His goodness is abundant.

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His nature is good.

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The third point, our God is a gracious God and Father.

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Look at this text, James moves on.

00:18:05

Because not only has he said that these gifts are good gifts that come down from a good God, but he says a little more.

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He gives us an insight into the type of gifts God gives.

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This is just wonderful.

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This should encourage the Lord's people to

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to pray, but also to seek, to honor Him in everything.

00:18:28

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, every good gift and every perfect gift.

00:18:42

The good gift comes from a good God.

00:18:46

The perfect gift you could translate as complete, suitable, apt.

00:18:54

It's one thing to have a good earthly father, but it's quite another to have a God as our Heavenly Father.

00:19:04

Isn't it wonderful to know that the God who put everything in place and has a perfect plan and a divine will and will carry out his purposes no matter what man plans to defy his plan, that he's our Heavenly Father?

00:19:23

And He loves us with an everlasting love.

00:19:27

The reference to the Father of Lights, let me just deal with that before we come back to the application.

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The Father of Lights, this is alluding, we believe, to heavenly bodies.

00:19:38

Perhaps to the sun, which is the most brilliant star in our galaxy.

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It appears to us to be a great original fountain of light.

00:19:54

There's no light compared or contrasted with this, compared to the sun.

00:20:01

Even the moon is borrowing its light from the sun.

00:20:05

We can only see the planets or the stars and part of the Milky Way because God has allowed us to see it.

00:20:14

because our son is at the right, exactly at the right place in this galaxy, so that we can observe what others cannot.

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God is the Father of lights, but I want to go a little further.

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Not only is God the Father of lights or the Creator of lights, but He is the Father of His people.

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How did we become His children?

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Look at this a bit more next week, but it's by regeneration.

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and by adoption.

00:20:47

What are the nature of the Father's gifts?

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James tells us they're good gifts and they're perfect gifts.

00:20:56

Because God is good, he gives good gifts.

00:21:02

But what about the struggles we have?

00:21:04

What about the difficulties we have?

00:21:05

Are they God's gifts?

00:21:08

God has given the greatest gift, but even the lesser gifts are good gifts.

00:21:15

by their very nature, by their particular essence.

00:21:21

He gives good gifts naturally and spiritually, providentially and graciously.

00:21:27

He gives good gifts ranging from our weekday mercies up to the highest crowning blessings, says one.

00:21:36

In other words, everyday gifts are from God.

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What are those gifts?

00:21:42

Well, you've enjoyed some of them already this morning.

00:21:45

Rest, food, water, shelter, health, in a measure.

00:21:54

Strength for each day.

00:21:57

They are gifts from God.

00:22:00

He is the cause of all created goodness and He is the supplier of all goodness.

00:22:07

All good gifts.

00:22:09

One of the harvest hymns I remember singing a few years ago was all good gifts around us.

00:22:14

are sent from heaven above.

00:22:18

And of course, the response of the believer is to thank the Lord, thank the Lord for all His love.

00:22:24

But we don't need to just sing that at harvest.

00:22:27

We can sing that anytime, anytime of the day or night.

00:22:33

You know what happens when you start to praise God for His good gifts?

00:22:38

Then even sometimes the struggles and difficulties of life don't seem so bad after all.

00:22:48

God's gifts are good and they're perfect.

00:22:52

And I mentioned this already, but they're perfectly suited for every one of our needs.

00:22:59

Only God can do this.

00:23:02

Only the God of the Bible can do this.

00:23:04

Only the God of revelation can do this.

00:23:06

Only the God of creation can do this.

00:23:08

Only the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can do this.

00:23:14

They're perfectly suited.

00:23:17

They're absolutely suited for every single one of our needs.

00:23:25

They're good gifts and they're perfect gifts, and they come from above, not from below.

00:23:32

They come from our God, who is sovereign and superior and glorious.

00:23:39

And yet he reaches out and he pours out his good gifts upon us.

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Sometimes I think one of our reasons for complaining so much is not realizing how much God has given us.

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He has given us the ability to be here this morning.

00:23:58

He's given us strength and he has given us the opportunity to come to hear his word.

00:24:07

It's wonderful.

00:24:09

From the smallest gifts to the greatest gifts.

00:24:13

And I already alluded to this, but the greatest gift of all is our salvation in Jesus Christ.

00:24:19

And Paul describes the Lord Jesus as the indescribable gift.

00:24:24

How do you describe the indescribable gift?

00:24:27

We can't.

00:24:29

We don't have the words.

00:24:31

We don't have the language, we don't even have the comprehension of how great a gift Jesus Christ is, was, and ever will be to this fallen world.

00:24:42

Which leads me nicely onto the next point.

00:24:45

'Cause God is the source of all goodness, and His goodness is not mixed, and He's a gracious God and Father.

00:24:55

And God, fourthly, gives gifts and never recalls them.

00:25:01

This is extraordinary when you contrast him to all the other religious deities.

00:25:08

They don't give graciously.

00:25:10

They give capriciously.

00:25:13

You talk to some of their most devoted followers, be it whatever religion of the world.

00:25:21

Argyll gives gifts with no variableness.

00:25:25

Oh, there's so much here, but let me just...

00:25:27

say this, There's no changeableness.

00:25:31

Malachi tells us that God is an unchangeable God.

00:25:35

I am the Lord that changeth not.

00:25:37

The old writers write about the immutability of God.

00:25:42

This is our God.

00:25:43

He's unchangeable.

00:25:45

And when he gives a gift, he doesn't, another thing, he doesn't recall it.

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This is so crucial.

00:25:52

Sometimes we as men and women in this world, we give a gift and we want to take it back.

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Not so with God.

00:26:00

When God gives a gift, whatever that gift may be, God never recalls it.

00:26:08

You could compare this phrase with 1 John 1:5.

00:26:12

You could also speak in other places, I mentioned Malachi 3, about this variableness, this changeableness,

00:26:21

We're so changeable.

00:26:23

We're like the tide.

00:26:24

We're like the breeze.

00:26:26

One day it's a breezy, it's a lovely, breezy day, and another day it's a bit more windy.

00:26:33

Not for the Lord.

00:26:35

Just let me perhaps apply this more specifically.

00:26:39

Is music a gift?

00:26:41

Yes, it's a gift from God, but is every type of music permissible and suitable in the worship of God, this good, holy, just, and pure God?

00:26:51

Well, listen to these words of a contemporary song.

00:26:54

All my life you have been faithful.

00:26:56

All my life you have been so, so good.

00:26:59

With every breath I am able, I will sing of the goodness of God.

00:27:03

Your goodness is running after it's running after me.

00:27:07

Your goodness is running after it's running after me.

00:27:10

Is there a problem with that?

00:27:13

Well, the focus is on me.

00:27:16

It's on I.

00:27:18

And what does it mean for God's goodness to be running after us?

00:27:22

Well, it doesn't mean what these writers think it does.

00:27:25

Theologically, God's goodness follows after us.

00:27:33

It comes to us from Almighty God.

00:27:36

It's not some kind of non-personal essence or energy.

00:27:42

It's God who gives His goodness.

00:27:45

Let me read someone else.

00:27:48

Perhaps a more familiar hymn, or certainly a more familiar hymn writer, he wrote these words.

00:27:56

He was a contemporary of the Countess of Huntingdon.

00:27:59

He was the president of the Trevecca College, if you know your church history.

00:28:07

His name was Thomas Howis.

00:28:09

He wrote these words, O thou from whom all goodness flows, I lift my soul to thee in all my sorrows, conflicts, woes,

00:28:18

Good Lord, remember me.

00:28:22

Think of that.

00:28:23

Think of that.

00:28:24

Doesn't that sum it up?

00:28:25

Oh, thou from whom all goodness flows.

00:28:29

I lift my soul today.

00:28:30

See the worship here?

00:28:32

In all my sorrows, conflicts, woes.

00:28:36

Good Lord, remember me.

00:28:39

Or are we singing another hymn?

00:28:42

We could have had it earlier.

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It's a hymn that speaks of the

00:28:48

Goodness of the Lord.

00:28:50

I will sing.

00:28:53

I will sing.

00:28:54

Let me read it for you.

00:29:00

Sorry, I sing the almighty power of God.

00:29:04

What does a writer want us to think about?

00:29:07

I sing the almighty power of God that made the mountains rise and spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies.

00:29:17

Listen to these words.

00:29:18

I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food.

00:29:23

He formed the creatures with His word and then pronounced them good.

00:29:29

You see?

00:29:33

I hope you see the contrast.

00:29:37

That is the essence of God's goodness.

00:29:40

He fills the earth with food, He forms the creatures with His word by order.

00:29:47

and then prevents them good.

00:29:51

But the last thing I want us to consider this morning, how -- let me just summarize it.

00:29:55

God is the source of all good.

00:29:58

Our first point was God is the source of all good.

00:30:00

Secondly, God's goodness is not mixed.

00:30:02

Thirdly, our God is gracious.

00:30:05

He's a gracious God and Father.

00:30:07

And fourthly, God's gifts are given and never recalled.

00:30:10

And lastly, and perhaps most significantly,

00:30:14

God's goodness comes to us through Jesus Christ.

00:30:21

This is so important.

00:30:25

Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2 in verse 5, There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave his life a ransom for all.

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And we might think, well, immediately that's to do with salvation, and it is.

00:30:43

There's only one mediator.

00:30:45

There is only one priest.

00:30:46

There is one only one redeemer.

00:30:48

There's only one savior, and that's Jesus Christ.

00:30:50

What's a mediator?

00:30:51

He's a go-between.

00:30:53

He's an intercessor.

00:30:55

He's one that acts as the bridge that reconciles a sinful man or woman to a holy God.

00:31:03

Young people need Him.

00:31:05

Without Him, they're lost forever.

00:31:08

Older people need this mediator.

00:31:11

Religious people need this mediator.

00:31:14

They need Jesus Christ.

00:31:18

But I just want us to point out something else.

00:31:21

Through the mediator, we have salvation, forgiveness for sin, a cleanse conscience, a new life, a new heart, a new direction, and a place in glory.

00:31:39

But what about us believers on earth?

00:31:44

all God's good gifts come to us through Jesus Christ.

00:31:51

All of them.

00:31:55

The reason God gives such good gifts is because He's mediating them or ministering them or perhaps even distributing them through His Son Jesus Christ.

00:32:13

The Puritans saw Christ as the means by which God's divine goodness is communicated to us.

00:32:22

We derive even a transforming sanctification, a transformation in our hearts and our souls, they come through Jesus Christ and God's goodness comes to us in Jesus Christ.

00:32:40

Christ is, was, and ever shall be good.

00:32:44

As the second person of the Trinity, of course, He is.

00:32:47

But even when He was walking on earth, He was perfectly good.

00:32:51

No one could cast aspersions at Him.

00:32:58

And that's why the gospel is so rich.

00:33:02

Because if we're somebody here this morning and

00:33:04

we've never known what it is to be forgiven of sin, then we've never known the reality of God's goodness coming to us.

00:33:16

What a wonderful truth that is.

00:33:19

We saw how God's goodness is like a rivulet that is flowing to every one of His people and how it is directed is through Christ.

00:33:33

Christ is our good, holy, glorious Mediator.

00:33:39

So what about us?

00:33:42

What will we do this week?

00:33:45

How will we respond to this?

00:33:49

We respond in worship, adoration, praise and thanksgiving.

00:33:58

That's how the psalmists bring us to that place.

00:34:01

They bring us, the psalmists again and again, and the writers in the New Testament, they bring us to that place where we look up and we look to a good God who is gracious in all His ways, who is kind and generous and overflowing in His goodness, and He never recalls the gifts He gives His children.

00:34:26

Oh, what a God.

00:34:29

Let us pray.

00:34:29

Our gracious and glorious God, we're so thankful that thou art a good God, a gracious, loving, merciful God, a God who pours out good gifts upon thy people without changing thy will or even recalling thy gifts.

00:34:47

O Lord, we pray this day that we would honour thee, we would learn how to live to thy glory in this world,

00:34:55

and bless each dear one gathered before thee.

00:34:58

We ask in the name of Jesus Christ, thy Son, for his sake.

00:35:02

Amen.

