

Place: Lurgan Baptist 26:10:2003

Reading: James 1:1-17

## PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

### 6. THE GREATEST OF ALL GIVERS

The story is told of an ancient kingdom whose Sovereign had just died, and whose ambassadors were sent to choose a successor. They had to make a choice between two twin infants. They found the little fellows fast asleep, and looking at them carefully, agreed that it was very difficult to decide. That is, until they noticed a curious little difference between them .... for as they lay there, one infant had his tiny fists closed tight, *but the other slept with his little hands wide open*. Instantly, they made their selection of the latter, and sure enough, the story very properly concludes with the record that, as he grew up in his high station he came to be known as the King with the open hand. My .... this is no story, but glorious truth, that we have not a close-fisted Deity, but a God with an ever-open Hand, for our God is the Greatest of all Givers. I heard the story of a well-known preacher who made an appeal to his congregation for money to build a new building. He invited everyone to bring their gifts to the front of the building. Immediately the front was filled with people and their gifts. A little crippled girl came slowly to the front, pulling a little ring from her finger she laid it down at the front. Adjusting her crutches she turned around and began to walk back to her seat. After the service an usher sent for and brought her to the pastor's study. The pastor said, *"Dear girl, I saw the thing that you did tonight. It was a beautiful gesture, however the response of the people was so great, that we have received enough money to build our new church building. We want to give the ring back to you."* The little girl looked stern faced as she said, *"I didn't give that ring to you I gave it to God."* My .... we all like to think of ourselves as generous givers, but our God is the Greatest of all givers. The best known verse in the Bible reminds us that *"God so loved the world .... that He gave His only begotten Son."* ( Jn 3:16 ) Paul poses the question, *"how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."* ( Rom 8:32 )

And here in ( 1:17 ) James reminds us of the *Faithfulness of our God!* Now if we are to appreciate the full force of the truth which James which now sets before us, we must begin by seeing how exactly he matches and balances what he has pressed home in the preceding verses. You see ( 1:17 ) resumes the topic of (1:13 ) There he has pointed out that God is not the source of evil, but now he says that God is the source of all good. Having denied that God can do us harm, James now tells us that He does us only good. Now do you know what one of the Devil's tricks is ? He tries to convince us that our Father is holding out on us, that He does not really love us and care for us ! Do you recall when Satan approached Eve, he suggested that if God really loved her He would permit her to eat of the forbidden fruit. ( Gen 3:1 ) When Satan tempted the Lord Jesus he raised the question of hunger, *"If your Father loves you, why are you hungry?"* You see, the *Goodness*

*of God* is a great barrier against yielding to temptation. It was this very thing that helped to keep Joseph from sinning when he was tempted by his masters wife. Do you recall what Joseph said, “ *There is none greater in his house than I, neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife, how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ?* ” ( Gen 39:8 ) Joseph knew that all these blessings he had experienced had come from God . It was the goodness of God through the hands of his employer that restrained him in the hour of temptation.

Now this is the theme of ( 1:17 ) and I want to talk to you this .... about, *The Greatest of all Givers*.

### **(1) THE NEED THAT GOD MEETS: A GIVING GOD**

You see, God meets our needs through His gifts. “ *Every good .... and cometh down.* ” That is to say, everything that is good comes from God and nothing but what is good comes from God. My .... we have a Giving God. As the songwriter put it, “ *He giveth and giveth and giveth again.* ” Now there is a:

#### **(a) VARIETY IN THESE GIFTS:**

Two different Greek words used in ( 1:17 ) have to do with the gift and the giving. When James says, “ *Every good gift,* ” ( dosis ) he is referring to the Act of Giving. ( Phil 4:15 ) But when he says, “ *Every perfect gift,* ” he is referring to the Gift itself. In other words, both the act of giving and the gift are good. Now did you know that the value of a gift can be greatly diminished by the way in which it is given ? I mean have you husbands ever tossed a gift to your wife as though it were an obligation. Have you ever said what I have said, “ *here its our anniversary I knew you would be expecting something ?* ” Have you ever done that ? Of course you have ! But when God gives He does it in a loving gracious manner. What God gives and how God gives are both good. Now there are scholars who take the first Greek word here to mean *Material Blessings* and the second to mean *Spiritual Blessings*, whether we do or not there is a variety in these gifts !

I often ponder Paul’s question, “ *What hast thou that thou didst not receive ?* ” ( 1 Cor 4:7 ) Do you ever think of your *Material Benefits* ? The daily benefits of life. Do you ever think of your *Spiritual Blessings* ?

My .... God has given to you His Word and the production and the preservation of the Bible is such a miracle that it can only be traced to the hand of God, God has given to you His Son, what an unspeakable gift. God has given to you His Spirit who indwells us.

Do you see the variety in the gifts that God bestows on us ? James also speaks about:

#### **(b) THE CONSTANCY OF THESE GIFTS:**

Do you see the words “ *cometh down,* ” ? They are in the continuous present tense meaning God continues to give. God is frequently, constantly, daily showering His gifts upon us ! There

will never be a moment when He is not giving. On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1808, a grand performance of the Creation took place in Vienna, and the composer himself Franz Joseph Hayden, who was 76 was able to be in attendance. He was so feeble that he had to be wheeled into the hall in a chair. As the chorus and orchestra burst with full power into the passage “ *And there was light,* ” the crowd burst into applause and cheers, turning to the great composer to show their appreciation. The old composer was seen striving to raise himself. Once on his feet he mustered up all his strength, and in reply to the audience, cried out as loudly as he could, “ *No, no ! Not from me but,* ” pointing to heaven “ *from whence .... from heaven above comes all.* ” My .... can you see (a) (b) but notice:

### **(c) *THE PROPRIETY ABOUT THESE GIFTS:***

Did you ever give a gift and you discovered later that it was most unsuitable ? The perfumed shaving gel to the man who uses an electric shaver, the tenth set of cutlery received as a wedding gift. Good gifts all of them, and marked perhaps with genuine generosity, but spoilt because not suitable. Now here is the first thing that James says. (1) My .... should that not motivate us in

#### **1. Our ADORATION of Him:**

Surely His giving ought to make us love Him more ?  
The more He gives, the more we should love, and adore.

#### **2. Our APPRECIATION of Him:**

My .... does the Goodness of God not make you thankful ? ( Ps 100:4 ) One of God’s faithful missionaries Alan Gardiner experienced many physical difficulties and hardships throughout his service for the Saviour. Despite his troubles he said, “ *While God gives me strength, failure will not daunt me.* ” In 1851 at the age of 57 he died of disease and starvation while serving on Picton Island, on the southern tip of South America. When his body was found his diary lay nearby. It bore the record of hunger, thirst, wounds and loneliness. The last entry in his written book showed the struggle of his shaking hand as he tried to write legibly. But here were his last words, “ *I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God.* ” 1: 2:

#### **(3) Our CONSECRATION to Him:**

Should His gifts and His giving, not motivate us to follow him closer ? C.T. Studd, said “ *If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be to great for me to make for Him.* ” (1)

### **(2) THE NAME THAT GOD BEARS: A REVEALING GOD**

James speaks of Him as “ *the Father of lights.* ” ( 1:17 ) I recall when I was in South Africa in 1983. The first night I was there I was in the beautiful city of Cape Town and my host took me

right above the city and there I had a panoramic view of the sights of Cape Town by night. You see, all those lights probably came from one basic source, and that's what James is saying here. Did you ever think of the some of the "lights," of which God is the Father, the Author, the Source. There's

**(a) THE LIGHT OF CREATION:**

God's first spoken word recorded in the Bible is, "Let there be light." ( Gen 1:3 ) Then God said, "Let there be lights." ( 1:14 ) The Bible says, "And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." ( 1:16 ) My .... it was God who created these great luminaries, these heavenly bodies. God is the creator of the sun, the moon and the stars. Do you recall what the psalmist says, "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showed His handywork." ( Ps 19:1 ) So there is (a)

**(b) THE LIGHT OF ILLUMINATION:**

Do you remember Daniel ( Ch 2 ) ? The story of Nebuchadnezzar's troubled dreams. None of the wise men in Babylon could interpret the King's strange vision, and they were sentenced to death. Daniel, next in line for execution, held a prayer meeting with his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and in answer to their prayers God revealed the secret of the King's dream to Daniel. The story goes on "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His, and He changeth the times and the seasons, He removeth kings, and setteth up kings, He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding, He revealed the deep and secret things, He knoweth what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with Him." ( 2:20-22 ) My .... its God Himself who reveals spiritual things !

When Philip drew up to the chariot, the eunuch was reading from the most famous of all Bible prophecies, but it seems he was not getting on very well, because when Philip asked him if he understand what he was reading he replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me ?" ( Acts 8:31 ) You see, he needed the Spirit-filled Philip to explain God's Word to him and without that help he found the Scriptures dark and meaningless. My .... unless the Holy Spirit of God makes the gospel clear to an unsaved person, then all the preaching, programmes, and preparation that might be brought to bear on that person will not result in his conversion. *It must be the work of God, breaking in with light into that persons mind and showing him the truth of God's Word relative to himself and to Christ.* ( 1 Cor 2:14 ) And my .... is it any different for us ?

Do we believers not need to be dependent on the Spirit of God to reveal God's truth from God's Word ? You see, every time we come to the Bible, whether we've been saved for a few weeks or many years our attitude must be this, "how can I understand unless Someone should guide me, and unless that person is the Holy Spirit ? (a) (b) and there is:

**(c) THE LIGHT OF SALVATION:**

Do you remember what Paul said to the Ephesian believers ? “ *Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light.* ”

( Eph 5:8 1 Pet 2:19 ) You see, the state of being born again, a child of God, a Christian is described in the Bible as being in light in contrast to darkness, and of that light, the light of salvation, God is the Father and Source. So our God is Giving God, a revealing God.

### **(3) THE NATURE THAT POSSESS’S: AN UNCHANGING GOD**

Do you see what James says, “ *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* ”  
Look at:

#### **(a) THE PRINCIPLE:**

Do you see those two words ? “ *is no,* ” they literally mean “ *can be no.* ” Now do you see the difference ? James is not merely saying that with God there has been no variableness so far, nor he is saying that God is not variable at the moment, *but that with God variableness is impossible, a changeable, variable God is a contradiction in terms.* He is not saying that God has not changed so far, but that God can never change. As the first U.S.A. astronaut prepared to go into space, one reporter asked, “ *What are you depending on most on your venture ?* ” No doubt, the reporter expected the astronaut to say something about the quality of his equipment, or the people at the space centre. But instead he replied, “ *That God will not change His laws.* ” A.W. Pink said, “ *God cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect, and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse.* ” God says with wonderful clarity, “ *I am the Lord I change not.* ” ( Mal 3:6 ) That is the principle. Now what flows from that ? As we step out into a new week what does that mean ?

#### 1. God’s LOVE will be the Same:

My .... the God who has loved you with an everlasting love ( Jer 31:13 ) loves you as much now as He did then. There may be times in this week when like Peter you’ll be Self-Confident, times when like Elijah you will be Depressed, times when like Jonah, you will be Disobedient, and perhaps times when like Jeremiah you’ll be Resigning. ( Jer 20:9 ) Yet in spite of your failure, unbelief, and defeats the Lord will love you to the end.

**“ His love no end nor measure knows  
No change can turn its course  
Eternally the same it flows  
From one eternal source.”**

#### 2. God’s POWER will be the Same:

“ *Is anything too hard for the Lord ?* ” ( Gen 18:14 ) Any prayer too hard for him to answer, any need too great for Him to meet, any sinner too difficult for Him to save, any temptation too strong for Him to deliver ? No. For “ *with God all things are possible.* ” ( Matt 19:26 )

### 3. God's GRACE will be the Same:

Perhaps there will be moments when our pillows will be stained with tears. Days when like Mary we'll feel that our world is shattered ! But bless God, in the hour of trial, sorrow, difficulty, we'll hear Him say, " *My grace is sufficient for thee.* " Well, there is (a) but look at:

#### **(b) THE PICTURE:**

" *neither shadow of turning,* " The picture that James has in mind here is that of the sky, the natural heavens. The sun gives light, but not always to the same degree, because it is not always at the same angle. There is dawn, high noon, twilight, and dusk. The sun's light varies and changes. Sometimes there is an eclipse of the sun, this is a shadow caused by turning. The Amplified puts it like this, " *In the shining of Whom there can be no variation ( rising or setting ) or shadow cast by His turning as in an eclipse.* " Let me underscore one word.

" **His.** " Life may have its shadows, it almost certainly has, but they are never caused by His turning, by His changing. They may be caused by ours, because we have changed our position. *Have you stood exactly under a street light ?* If you stand exactly under it, no shadow is cast. Take one step away from the light, and you'll find a shadow in front of you. Not a very big one but a shadow caused by your turning, or changing your position. Take a few more steps and the shadow grows, more steps and it grows bigger.

Go far enough away and you'll be in total darkness. Now have you seen the picture ? There is never a shadow in your life because God has turned. My .... if there are shadows, it may be because you have changed your position ! I wonder, have you gone away ? Have you moved a step, or more from being right under the light of His revealed will ? If so then be sure of this, the further away you go, the darker and deeper the shadow will be. My .... turn back. Turn back now, and as you do remember that with God there is no turning. Never a shadow in your life because He has turned, proved unfaithful or broken His Word.

" *Great is Thy faithfulness, ....there is no shadow of turning with Thee .... wilt be.* " Have you a glimpse of your God this .... ? A Giving God, a Revealing God, Unchanging God. " *This God is our God for ever and ever He will be our guide even unto death.* " Ps 48:14