

God Is The Source Of Good

- **God is good.** (Exod. 33:19; 34:6; Psa. 25:8; 33:5; 34:8; 100:5; 106:1).
- **God does not withhold good from His children** (Psa. 84:11).

JAM 1:17 Every good [useful, beneficial] **thing bestowed and every perfect** [complete, without defect] **gift is from above, coming down from the Father of [all] lights** [physical or spiritual], **with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.**

1. "Father of lights"
 - a. God is source of all light.
 - b. He is Light (1 Jn. 1:5). This is a reference to His perfect character, and the fact He is above sin or sinful thoughts.
 - c. He is the source of spiritual light and of the heavenly lights. (Gen. 1:1).
2. James may have the "heavenly lights" [stars, planets, etc] in mind.
 - a. God created the "the world" through His Son. (Heb. 1:2).
 - b. He made all things [the universe] through Jesus. (Jn. 1:3).
 - c. We now know there are billions of galaxies and perhaps millions of planet, and God created it all through Jesus.
3. "with whom there is no variation" - revolving lights produce variation and shadows.
 - a. Light changes, but not God.
 - b. God is faithful, unchangeable.
 - c. He has changed the way He deals with man in the different dispensations, but He Himself does not change.

JAM 1:18 In the exercise of His [free] **will He brought us forth** [gave us spiritual life] **by the word of truth** [the gospel, the law of liberty], **so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.**

- "exercise of His will" - Man is saved because God wants him to be saved.
- No one has forced God to save man. No one could be so good as to be deserving of salvation.
- God planned to save man through His Son Jesus. (Eph. 1:4).
- Gr. "apar~~che~~" [a par khay'] -first-fruits. see 1 Cor. 15:20, 23

1. They were among the first of a much larger group who would become God's spiritual children. See 1 Cor. 16:15

2. We are saved by “the word of truth” (Rom. 10:17; Jas. 1:21; Jn. 6:45; Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:23).
3. “creatures” here refers to mankind. Gr. “ktisma” [ktis ma’] - a created being, creature. (1 Tim. 4:4).
 - a. It is man that is made in “the image of God.” (Gen. 1:26, 27).
 - b. It is man that is “a little lower than the angels.” (Psa. 8:5; Heb. 2:7).

Note: “ktisis” - (1) a created thing, a creature. (2) the human creation. (Mk. 16:15; Col. 1:23) (3) a spiritual creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

JAM 1:19 This you know, my beloved brethren [brothers in Christ]. **But let everyone be quick to hear** [God’s word], **slow to speak** [to differ with God’s word] **and slow to [be] anger** [at God’s word];

Two Interpretations

Interpretation 1 - The usual way this verse is explained is this.

1. “Quick to hear” - good listeners, quick to listen

Most people are not good listeners	Show concern	Make friends
Good listeners gets facts straight	Learn faster	Gain understanding

2. “slow to speak” - think before we speak, do not talk too much.

Some people talk non-stop	Those who talk too quickly hurt others and make enemies
Many people speak before they think.	Show foolishness

3. “slow to anger” - do not lose temper, slow to become angry.

- Anger usually leads to a lot of hurtful, unrighteous things.
- It does not accomplish the righteousness of God. - right actions.

This interpretation is good advice, but not likely what was meant in context.

Interpretations 2 - Fits the context.

1. We are to listen attentively to God’s sacred word and be very slow to disagree with it or to become angry at it.
 - a. The Bereans received the word with readiness of mind. (Acts 17:11), and so did Cornelius (“hear all things that have been command”Acts 10:33).
 - b. **It is the direct opposite of Proverbs 28:9.**
2. We must be “slow to speak,” that is, “talking back to God’s word.” We are hardly qualified to disagree with God.
3. We must be “slow to anger,” that is, we must not respond to God’s word with anger.

- a. Man constantly gets mad over what God says in His word.
 - 1) Some have burn the word, and others who been very critical of it.
 - 2) Some have cursed God in their anger.
- b. Man wants to have his own way, and resists God’s way if it differs.

JAM 1:20 for the anger of man does not achieve [bring about, work] the righteousness of God.

- “ouk erga’zomai” - works not
1. Anger does not promote God’s righteousness.
 2. It leads to sin - not to the things God requires.
 3. We must not even let the sun go down on our anger. (Eph. 4:26, 27).

JAM 1:21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness [moral filth] and all that remains [overflowing, the surplus] of wickedness [evil], in humility [with yielding attitude] receive the word implanted [God’s word deeply rooted in your hearts], which is able to save your [immortal] souls.

- “rhuparia” - [rhu pa ree’ a] “filthiness, uncleanness , pollution, moral defilement”
 - “perisseia” [pe ris say’ a] - superabundance (Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 8:2; 10:15; Jas. 1:21).
1. The word of God, deeply rooted in our hearts, lead to salvation. See James 1:18.
 2. “Souls” refers here to the immortal part of man. (Matt. 10:28). “psuche” [psoo khay’]
 - a. “Soul” is used at times for “life.” (Matt. 2:20; 6:25).
 - b. O.T. “nephesh” had the basic idea of “that which breathes.” (Gen. 2:7). It most often denoted life.
 3. See also James 5:20; Matt. 16:26. - It is used in these verses for the immortal part of man.
 4. “spirit” (immortal part of man) Eccles. 12:7; Acts 7:60; Heb. 12:9, 23; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2:11, 25; 4:19.
 - a. Heb. “ruach”
 - b. Gr. “pneuma” [pnoo’ ma]

Doers Of The Word

Key Verse of Book

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JAM 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers [listeners] who delude [dupe, deceive] themselves.

- Lit “And become you doers of [the] word”

- “paralogi’zomai” - “deceive, delude.”
1. Jesus taught we must be doers of God’s word. to be saved. (Lk. 6:46; Matt. 7:21-27). See Heb. 5:9; Jas. 4:17
 2. One who does not obey does not have saving faith. See Rom. 1:5; 16:26.
 3. As earlier noted, **this is the key verse of James.**

JAM 1:23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

- “mirror” - Gr. “es’optron” - polished metals such as silver, copper and tin. (twice in N.T. Jas. 1:23; 1 Cor. 13:12).
1. It does no good to look into a mirror and see changes that need to be made and then do nothing about it.
 2. Likewise, it does no good to merely hear the word, and not be one who obeys.
 3. We must let the gospel (the word of truth) transform our lives into the likeness of Jesus.

JAM 1:24 for once he has looked at himself [in the mirror] and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

- “epilantha’nomai” - “to forget.” – Lit “immediately forget what sort he was.”
 - NIV “and forgetting what he has heard.” ---- ESV “forgets what he looks like.”
1. Looking into a mirror is beneficial if needed changes are made.
 - a. Some foolishly look into a mirror and do nothing about it.
 - b. Some foolishly listen to the word of God, and then do not obey it.
 - c. Some foolishly think ignorance is bliss, and some foolishly think that knowing is enough.
 2. We must let God’s word become deeply rooted in us and transform us. (Col. 3:16).

JAM 1:25 But one who looks intently [closely] at the perfect [complete, faultless] law, the law of liberty [freedom], and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer [forgetting what he heard or read] but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

- “but an effectual doer” is Lit. “but a doer of (the) work”
 - “parakupto” [pa ra koop’ to] - “to bestow a close and attentive look, to look intently” (Jas. 1:25; 1 Pet. 1:12).
1. “law of liberty” is the same as “word of truth” (1:18), “implanted word” (1:21), the “word” (1:22).
 - a. See “truth” Jn. 8:32; “gospel” Rom. 1:16.
 - b. “liberty” comes from the Greek.” eleutheria” [e loo the ree’ a] meaning “freedom, liberty.”
 - 2 It frees us from the condemnation of sin. (Rom. 8:1).

- 3 It freed the Jews from the condemnation of the Mosaical Law.
4. It does not mean there are no restraints. (Gal. 5:1).
 - a. Freedom must not be used as occasion of the flesh. (Gal. 5:13).
 - b. It is to be used to do God's will.
 - c. We must "hunger and thirst" for righteousness. (Matt. 5:6).
 - d. It should be our intense desire to do what pleases God.
5. "Liberty" is not doing as one pleases, but being freed from the bondage of sin.
 - a. Man has never been free to do his own will if it conflicts with God's will. (Matt. 7:21; Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8, 9).
 - b. We must obey the Lord (Heb. 5:9), or suffer the consequences. (Eccles. 12:14; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9).
6. God's law is complete - lacking in nothing. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jn. 16:13).

Note:

- The gospel (the new covenant) is a law. (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:20-22; Heb. 8:10).
 - See also "law of faith" Rom. 3:27; "law of the Spirit of life" Rom. 8:2.
7. The word of God leads us to obey Christ.
 - a. It is in Christ that we have salvation and freedom from condemnation.
 - b. We have this salvation as long as we abide in Christ.
 - c. This does not mean perfection, but it does mean we continue to walk in the light and continue to confess our sins. (1 Jn. 1:7, 9).

Pure And undefiled Religion

- How can one be sure he is religious? How can one be sure he is approved of God.?
- Here is a test. This is not the only test.

JAM 1:26 If anyone [Christian] **thinks [considers] **himself to be religious** [devout, pious in his own estimation], **and yet does not bridle** [control, keep a tight reign on] **his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless** [vain, useless].**

- "thre skei a" [thray skay' a] - "religious, devout, pious."
- "chalinagoeo" [kha lee na go ge' o] - "to guide, bridle, control, keep in check." (Jas. 1:26; 3:2).

Comments:

- It is not wrong to think we are religious, that is, seeking to please God.
- It is not wrong to believe we are God’s children. (1 Jn. 3:1,2).
- It is not wrong to believe that God answers our prayers. (1 Jn. 5:14,15).
- It is not wrong to believe we are saved. (1 Jn. 5:13).

Additional Comments:

- Thinking we are religious does not mean we are religious.
 - One can certainly be deceived (Matt. 7:21-23). Example of Paul (Acts 23:1).
1. One who attends the assembly on a regular basis or reads his Bible daily might consider himself religious.
 2. This is commendable, but it must be accompanied with the bridling of the tongue.
 - a. Jesus taught we must be very careful with our tongues. (Matt. 12:36, 37).
 - b. James will have much to say about the tongue in this epistle. (Jas. 1:19;3:1-12; 4:11,12;5:12).
 3. The Greek word “mataios” [ma’ ti os] means “vain, worthless,” and shows that controlling the tongue is not an option for those who want to go to heaven.
 - a. Our religion is “vain” without seeking to control the tongue.
 - b. This does not mean we will never slip with the tongue. (Jas. 3:2, 8).

JAM 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.	JAM 3:8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.
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- c. It does mean we must guard our words, and seek forgiveness when we mess up.
- d. We must ask God’s forgiveness, and the forgiveness of the person or persons we have sinned against.

JAM 1:27 This is pure [clean] and undefiled [unblemished, faultless] religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit [look after] orphans and widows in their distress [destitution], and to keep oneself unstained [unpolluted, uncontaminated] by the world.

- “to visit” [episkep’tomai] literally means “to go see,” but here it means to supply the needs of and care for.
- It is to visit for the purpose of comfort and relief.
- See Matt.25:36, 43.

Tests

- These two tests are not the only tests of the genuineness of our Christianity.

- See previous test (Jas. 1:26), and some other tests presented by James. (Jas. 2:1-13, 14-17; 3:13-18; 4:17).
- See sermon on the Mount for additional tests. (Matt. 5, 6, 7). Also Matt. 18:1-35, etc.
- Other writers give more tests. (Gal. 5:19-23; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:14, 15, 17, 18; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

Orphans Part 1

1. The Greek “orphanos” [or fa nos’] denotes one deprived of parents.	4. One might be an orphan through illness, imprisonment, etc.
2. It occurs only once in N.T. to refer to orphans. It is used in John 14:18 of the disciples not being left helpless or desolate without a teacher, guide, guardian.	5. It basically has the idea of a child who has no support. and care.
3. One might be an orphan through death, abandonment, or persecution.	6. A child who has no one to provide for him must have help to survive.

Note:

- Children need support, but they need much more to develop properly.
- We are to help them with their **physical needs** and **emotional needs**.
- Children need love and training. (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).
- Here are some Old Testament references to orphans. (Exod. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 14:28,29; 24:17, 19-21; 27:19; Psa. 68:5).

Orphans Part 2

1. No details are given about how to provide for orphans.	5. It may be done with individual funds or money from the collection.
2. Details are a matter of opinion - not scriptures.	6. We must not become so obsessed with technicalities that we neglect helping orphans.
3. It may be done in private homes or orphanages.	7. It is sin to argue about how to care for orphans, and then fail to help them.
4. Some orphans cannot be helped in private homes or even orphan homes because of serious medical problems.	8. We need to give priority to the care of orphans. We can be sure this is right.

Widows Part 1

1. The Greek “chera” [khay’ ra] (widows) denotes one deprived of a husband.	4. God has always been concerned about widows. (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:9-16). See Psa. 68:5.
2. Technically it refers to one who has lost her husband in death.	5. We must also be mindful of them as individuals and as a church.
3. It is not likely that James would exclude a woman whose husband was unable to take care of her or a wife who who had been abandoned by her husband.	6. This obligation applies first to the family and then to the church. Christians in general are not excluded from helping widows.

Note:

- Some Pharisee’s cheated them. (Mk. 12:40; Matt. 23:14; Lk. 20:47).
- Others failed to support a parent or parents. (Matt. 15:1-7).
- Some widows today do not need financial help, but they may need help in other ways.

Some Ways To Help Widows
Part 2

1. Financial	5. Including in fellowship and social circles
2. Encouragement	6. Give them work to do. Acts 16; 1 Tim.5.
3. Keeping in contact	7. Help them to feel secure and unafraid.
4. Helping with things they cannot do or safely do.	8. Protect them from all kinds of evils.

Helping The Needy

1. Some argue “to visit” and “keep oneself unspotted” enjoins individual action only.
2. They argue the church is not responsible to care for orphans, but this is to be done by individuals.
3. Some contend the church has a responsibility to its own members only.
4. The fact something is individually enjoined does not mean it cannot be collectively discharged.
5. The Christians in the Jerusalem church sold all their goods, and gave the money to the church - “laid it at the apostles feet.” (Acts 4:37; 5:2).
6. The fact we cannot help all the needy and all widows and orphans does not mean we should not help all we can.

Note:

1. Our first obligation is to our Christian family (1 Tim. 5:8), but this does not mean we should never help unbelievers. (Gal. 6:10).
2. Some families have both believers and unbelievers in them, and surely we must not refuse to feed the unbelievers.
3. Many orphans would be unbelievers.

- a. Some would not be old enough to obey Christ in baptism.
 - b. There is no requirement that “the fatherless” be believers.
4. We go beyond the written word when we bind how to take care of orphans since zero details or restrictions are given.
 5. Christians must keep themselves unspotted [unstained] from the world. (Rom. 12:1,2; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:16; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Christians And The World

1. We have been called from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s Son. (Col. 1:13).
2. We are to walk as “children of light.” (Eph. 5:8).
3. Righteous living leads men to glorify God. (Matt. 5:14-16).
4. Righteous living keeps others from stumbling. (1 Cor. 10:31, 32).
5. It is “the pure in heart” who “shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:16).
6. Keeping oneself unspotted from the world does not mean we have no contact or association with the world. (Matt. 9:11; 1 Cor. 5:10; Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:19).
7. Keeping oneself unstained by world means we must be:

a. Listening to God. (Psa.1:1; Eccles. 12:13).	d. Resisting Satan (Jas. 4:8).
b. Obeying God. (1 Jn.5:3; Matt. 12:46-50).	e. Guard our close associations. (Psa. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:17).
c. Drawing near to God. (Jas. 4:7).	f. Making our religion a matter of the heart. (Matt. 22:37; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:22).

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