

James 1:16-18  
Do Not Be Deceived about God's Goodness

**Introduction:**

**1) I must not be deceived into wrong thinking about God—1:16**

- a) <sup>16</sup> *Do not be deceived* [pres. pass. impv. plana,w], *my beloved brothers*.
  - i) This is not merely an intellectual mistake, or a more important moral failure. This is a serious potential error which strikes at the heart of faith itself. (paraphrase of Peter Davids)
- b) If the great temptation of the sinner is *unbelief*, then the great temptation of the believer is *misbelief*. ... There is an insidious connection between misjudging the role of God in temptation and perverting the truth about God's nature. (Kurt Richardson)

**2) I need to think right thoughts about God—1:17-18**

- a) He is my Father who lovingly gives good to me—1:17a
  - Instead of sending temptation, God is the giver of good gifts. (Donald Burdick)
  - i) The gifts that God gives: <sup>17</sup> *Every good/beneficial, useful* [avgaqo,j] *gift* [do,sij] *and every perfect/complete* [te,leioj] *gift* [dw,rhma]
    - (1) Including wisdom (1:5)
  - ii) The Father is the source of these gifts: *is from above* [a;nwqen], *coming down from* [katabai,nw] *the Father of lights* [fwj],
    - (1) While this title is not found elsewhere in the NT, it IS found in Jewish literature such as Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls.
    - (2) Reminding us of creation (Gen. 1:14-18; Job 38: 19-21, 31-33; Jer. 31:35)
- b) He is my Father who is unchanging and constant—1:17b *with whom there is*
  - i) Unchanging: *no variation* [parallagh,] *or shadow* [avposki,asma] *due to change* [troph,]
    - (1) God does not pass from one state or phase to another.
    - (2) Cf. Heb. 13:8
  - ii) Given the instability of our world and our lives, the unchangeableness of God is vitally important to our thinking.
    - (1) Remember the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of *Abide With Me* (HG # 59)
  - iii) God does not change, but we do. We waver in our faith and in our thoughts about God.
- c) An example of His goodness: He is my Father who deliberately chose to give me spiritual life at just the right time in just the right way for just the right reason—1:18
  - i) When? <sup>18</sup> *Of his own will* [aor. pass. ptc. bou,lomai] (when He decided, having willed; in other words, God is free and unrestrained to give)
    - (1) In other words, our new birth is not accidental or solely our choice.

- ii) What? *he brought us forth* [avpokue,w] (gave birth to)
    - (1) Cf. Rom. 6:23
    - (2) Remember that sin ultimately gives birth to death (cf. 1:15))
  - iii) How (the means)? *by the word* [lo,goj] *of truth* (reality) [avlh,qeia],
    - (1) Cf. Jn. 17:17; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15
      - (a) Similar concept in Rom. 10:17 and 1 Pet. 1:23-25
      - (2) In contrast to deception (v. 16)
  - iv) Why? *that we* (saved Jews?) *should be a kind of firstfruits* [avparch,] *of his creatures* [kti,sma].
    - (1) Used of Jews: Jer. 2:3; shown in Acts 2
    - (2) Used of Christians: 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 16:15
- 3) The reader is again challenged to choose between the polar opposites of a God who is either good and gracious or evil and indifferent to His creatures. The way of wisdom is to acknowledge God's goodness. (W. Varner)
- 4) **Things to remember:**
- a) Just as the good and complete God gives us only good and complete gifts, so He desires his new creations to be good and complete persons! (W. Varner)
  - b) The solution for temptation is to be found in a close relationship with the Father and a (consistently obedient) response to His Word. (J. Ron Blue)