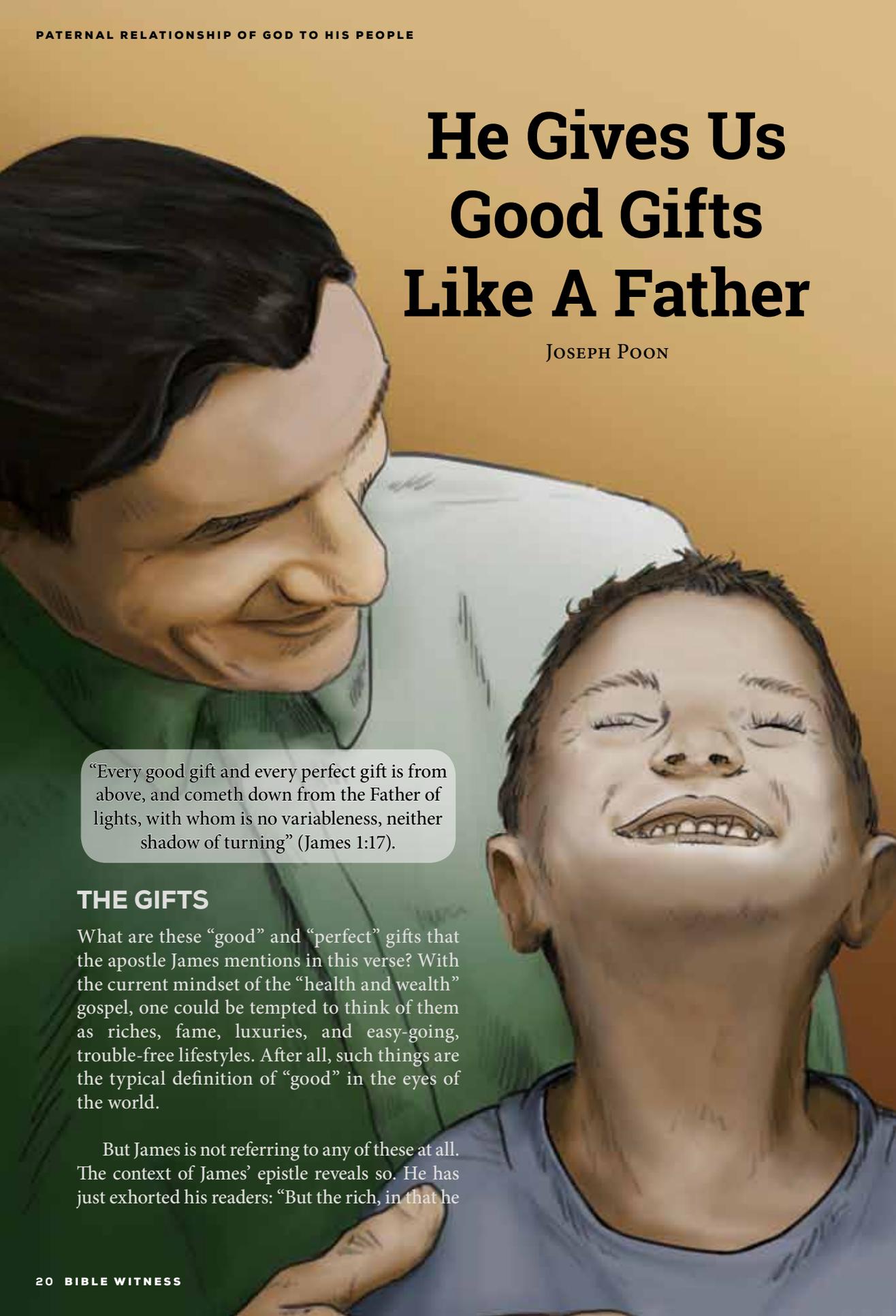


# He Gives Us Good Gifts Like A Father

JOSEPH POON

An illustration of a man with dark hair, wearing a green shirt, looking down at a young boy with a joyful expression. The boy is wearing a blue shirt and has his eyes closed and a wide smile. The background is a warm, orange-brown color.

“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).

## THE GIFTS

What are these “good” and “perfect” gifts that the apostle James mentions in this verse? With the current mindset of the “health and wealth” gospel, one could be tempted to think of them as riches, fame, luxuries, and easy-going, trouble-free lifestyles. After all, such things are the typical definition of “good” in the eyes of the world.

But James is not referring to any of these at all. The context of James’ epistle reveals so. He has just exhorted his readers: “But the rich, in that he

is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” (James 1:10-11). God, in no uncertain terms, says that fame and riches of a man are but momentary and their glamorous lifestyles are but temporary. All these things which men lust after do not last and are short-lived.

Hence, we know what “good” and “perfect” are not. So, what are they then? Turning to the context once again, it is noted that James twice mentions the same word “perfect” when addressing how to deal with the trials of life which God allows. “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). He then wraps up this segment of his exhortation concerning trials by reminding us that the blessed man who endures these trials “shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12). Herein we can gather that the “good” gifts have to do with the “perfecting” (i.e. bringing to spiritual maturity) of believers, which must necessarily be spiritual and eternal in value.

It must be mentioned in the same breath that James is in no way saying that riches are evil and cannot be good for the perfecting of saints. Rather, what James warns against is the lust from within a man, especially his love for money that can so easily entice him; when he succumbs to that lust, it inevitably causes him to sin (James 1:14-15). It is not money, but “the love of money” that is evil (cf. 1 Timothy 6:10). On the contrary, money can be used to forward the work of ministries for the training and “perfecting” of saints. Be that as it may, we are to examine ourselves as to what “good gifts” we are seeking. See to it

that we desire godly things and not lust after sinful ones!

## THE GIVER

James describes God, the Giver, as “the Father of lights”. It points the believer to God being the Creator of the bodies of light, such as the sun, moon and stars. Man not only considers the rising and setting of the sun as dependable and its rays stable; man also trustingly makes use of the moon and stars as navigation aids to guide him in the right direction.

Yet, the sun and moon can be eclipsed while clouds can block man’s view of the stars. But God their Creator is far more dependable and is without darkness. Thus with God, there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning”. The emphasis here is our heavenly Father’s consistency and dependability, for there is not the slightest trace of darkness in Him. Our heavenly Father who begets us is immutable, unchangeable in His goodness, mercy and truth. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is not like man who is fickle and changes his mind. How trustworthy and dependable He is in our lives!

Moreover, we are reminded that our God is the merciful and compassionate Father; He begets us of His own will (James 1:18a). So, there should never be a shadow of doubt for the believer regarding his heavenly Father’s intentions towards him. Whatever He gives and, for that matter, whatever be His will for our lives, can therefore only be “good, and acceptable, and perfect” (Romans 12:2b). Our heavenly Father, being the Father of lights, will only bring His children the greatest comfort, which should cause us to trust that whatever He ordains for our lives can only be good!

## THE GOOD

Our heavenly Father gives good gifts for a purpose. In the next verse, James immediately reminds the believers that “of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:18). The implication of “firstfruits” in the sacrifices to God indicates the best being reserved for God. Hence, we must live lives that distinguish us from the world and point men to Him.

God has brought us into this world at this specific age and time, and has saved us so that we may bear fruitful testimony for Him. This is the reason why any gift is ever given to us. Are you misusing the resources, talent(s) and time given to you to fulfil your carnal pursuits instead of using them to increase your knowledge of Him, live for Him, and to serve Him? Are you living a life that draws others around you to the Lord or are you no different from them in your speech, actions and values?

The point James is making is that even trials which our heavenly Father deems fit to send into our lives have good and perfecting results. Perhaps you, like the people in the apostle James’ time, may wonder: “Why am I having such a difficult time? Oh, it is so difficult to be a Christian!” But when you

understand that God is unchangeable in His goodness, you would not murmur, or complain, or blame God. Instead, you will patiently endure, waiting for the perfecting results at the end, and in the process, bear a “firstfruit” testimony for God. In fact, these trials are so good that they will make you complete and you will be left lacking nothing (James 1:4)!

## CONCLUSION

Our heavenly Father’s constancy in His love and dependability provides great comfort and strength for the believer to press on amidst challenges in life. It also helps him to keep things in perspective. The Christian must settle in his heart that God’s gifts are not about material enjoyments which the world seeks. When we understand this, we shall stop seeking and lusting after the temporal things. Then (whether in sickness or in health, in poverty or wealth) will we be able to trust God unwaveringly and realise as the hymn-writer says: “The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine”. Finally, the purpose of God’s gifts for our lives is to point men to God and glorify Him, not to be used merely for self-gratification, much less to be abused for unholy ends.



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