

# James 1:16-18 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

Click chart to enlarge  
 Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
 See also [Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

## JAMES Faith for Living

Motives for Works	The Place of Works: Outward Demonstration of Inner Faith						Outreach of Works
	Jas 1:1-18	Jas 1:19-2:13	Jas 2:14-25	Jas 3:1-12	Jas 3:13-4:12	Jas 4:13-5:12	
Trials & Temptations	Word & Works	Faith & Works	Tongue	Wars	Future	Others	
Faith In Testings	Fulfill Favor	Fallacy	Fountain	Factions	Faith and the Future	Faith and our Fellowship	
		FAITH AT WORK					

The Theme: The Testings of Personal Faith

The trials of the believer (James 1:2–12)

- A. The proper attitude toward trials (James 1:2–4)
  - 1. The attitude commanded (James 1:2)
  - 2. The reason indicated (James 1:3)
  - 3. The outcome to be realized (James 1:4)
- B. The use of prayer amid trials (James 1:5–8)
  - 1. The need for wisdom (James 1:5a)
  - 2. The request for wisdom (James 1:5b)
  - 3. The bestowal of wisdom (James 1:5c–8)
    - a. The divine response (James 1:5c)
    - b. The human obligation (James 1:6–8)
      - (1) The necessary attitude (James 1:6a)
      - (2) The rejected character (James 1:6b–8)
- C. The correct attitude toward life by the tried (James 1:9–11)
  - 1. The attitude of the lowly brother (James 1:9)
  - 2. The attitude of the rich (James 1:10–11)
    - a. The reason for the attitude (James 1:10a)
    - b. The illustration from the flower (James 1:11a)
    - c. The application to the rich (James 1:11b)
- D. The result of enduring trials (James 1:12)
  - 1. The blessedness of endurance (v 12a)
  - 2. The reward of endurance (James 1:12b)

The nature of human temptation (James 1:13–16)

- A. The source of human temptation (James 1:13–14)
  - 1. The repudiation of a divine source (James 1:13)
    - a. The rejection stated (James 1:13a)
    - b. The rejection vindicated (James 1:13b)
  - 2. The reality of the human source (James 1:14)
- B. The consequences of yielding to temptation (James 1:15)
- C. The warning against being deceived (James 1:16)

The activity of God in human affairs (James 1:17–18)

- A. The Giver of all good gifts (James 1:17)
- B. The Author of the believer's regeneration (James 1:18)

## The Test Marks of a Living Faith

Faith tested by its response to the Word of God (James 1:19–27)

- A. The reactions to the Word (James 1:19–20)
  1. The knowledge possessed (James 1:19a)
  2. The reaction demanded (James 1:19b)
  3. The reason stated (James 1:20)
- B. The reception of the Word (James 1:21)
  1. The stripping off of sins (James 1:21a)
  2. The appropriation of the Word (James 1:21b)
- C. The obedience to the Word (James 1:22–27)
  1. The demand for active obedience (James 1:22–25)
    - a. The statement of the requirement (James 1:22)
    - b. The illustration of the requirement (James 1:23–25)
      - (1) The negative portrayal (James 1:23–24)
      - (2) The positive portrayal (James 1:25)
  2. The nature of acceptable obedience (James 1:26–27)
    - a. The futility of activity without inner control (James 1:26)
    - b. Acceptable service with inner control (James 1:27) (from Hiebert - James Commentary)

**James 1:16** **Do not be deceived**, my **beloved brethren**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Me planasthe](#), (2PPPM) [adelphoi mou agapetoi](#).

**Amplified:** Do not be misled, my beloved brethren. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Do not err, my beloved brethren.

**NLT:** So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** make no mistake about that, brothers of mine! ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Stop being deceived, my brethren, beloved ones.

**Young's Literal:** Be not led astray, my brethren beloved;

**DO NOT BE DECEIVED, MY BELOVED BROTHERS: Me planasthe, (2PPPM) adelphoi mou agapetoi:**

- Do not be deceived - Matthew 22:29; Mark 12:24, 27; Galatians 6:7; Colossians 2:4,8; 2Timothy 2:18
- My beloved brethren - James 1:19; 2:5; Philippians 2:12; 4:1; Hebrews 13:1
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**DO NOT BE DECEIVED!**  
**A REPEATED WARNING**  
**A NEEDED WARNING!**

Dt 11:16 "Beware, lest your hearts **be deceived** and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them.

1 Cor 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived**; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

1 Cor 15:33 **Do not be deceived**: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

Gal 6:7+ **Do not be deceived**, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

James 1:16 **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brethren.

James has just given a sobering warning that **death** from **sin** could be the result if one yields to temptation by **lust**. In light of the grave danger James introduces a life giving command but softens it with the affectionate phrase **my beloved brethren** which clearly indicates his sincere concern for their souls. James knows that what he is warning about is deadly serious and wants to be sure they

are open to hear him.

**Spurgeon** - Do not err (be deceived) about anything; but, especially, do not err about this matter of temptation, where you may so easily make a blunder: "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

**Hiebert** interprets the warning against deception as follows "The warning may be connected with what immediately precedes (James 1:13-15) or with what follows (James 1:17-18). If the former, the warning is to not be **deceived about the source and consequences of sin**. If the latter, it is a **call to beware of casting suspicion on God and His beneficent activities**. The verse has a transitional function and, like a bridge, provides connections in both directions, but what has gone before seems primarily in view. The same formula occurs elsewhere to establish the rejection of a false opinion, as in 1 Corinthians 6:9; 15:33, and Galatians 4:7+. "It introduces an appeal to Christian consciousness and experience to confirm the writer's statement." "To harbor the false concept that God tempts people is to cast grave suspicion on His character. It is a grievous doctrinal error that must have dangerous consequences for daily conduct. ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

**MacDonald** introduces this section with a the thought that "It is not unusual for people who fall into sin to blame God instead of themselves. They say, in effect, to their Creator, "Why have you made me this way?" But this is a form of self-deception. Only good gifts come from God. In fact, He is the source of every good and every perfect gift. (borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Do not be deceived** - This is in the [present imperative with a negative](#). Either stop it or don't start it! Don't allow yourself to be led astray. Don't allow yourself to be caused to wander. Don't be misled. Stop being deceived! Keep in mind that the keeping of this command calls for supernatural enablement! See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

This command is "sandwiched" between two sections and can actually be read as going with one and/or the other. In the previous section (James 1:13-15+) James would be warning them not to keep being deceived about the source and consequences of sin. In the other direction (James 1:17-18+) the warning is for his readers to beware of ascribing to God any evil motives in His activities for He is the essence of goodness and all He does is good (see God's great attribute **Goodness**) .

**Steven Cole** sees this command as related to the issue of trials that God allows in our life asking...

How do you avoid Satan's deception and endure such a trial with God's joy through your tears? James shows us: To avoid being deceived when you go through trials, affirm by faith God's sovereign goodness. In Jas 1:12, James states,

"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

He goes on to show (Jas 1:13-15) that God does not tempt us with evil. When we sin, it comes from our own lusts. But now he shows that when we're under trials, we're susceptible to deception.

At such times, we must affirm by faith that God is good and only gives us good gifts (Jas 1:17). This is supremely illustrated in our salvation, which demonstrates His sovereign goodness (Jas 1:18). We are constantly tempted to reverse the truths that James sets forth in verses 13-18. Rather than blaming evil on ourselves, we're tempted to blame it on God or on others: "I was just the victim!" Rather than attributing everything good in our lives to our loving heavenly Father, we're prone to take the credit ourselves: "The reason I'm so blessed is because I'm such a good person." James wants us to avoid these common pitfalls so that we will persevere under trials and receive the crown of life.

### **1. When you go through trials, you are especially vulnerable to deception (Jas 1:16).**

James was not a cold-hearted theologian, dispensing a dose of doctrine and saying, "Call me if you're not better in a week!" He addresses his readers as "beloved brethren." James had a pastor's heart for these believers who were going through terrible trials. As a pastor, he knew that sound doctrine about God and His salvation is the most compassionate way to help people who are struggling through trials. God's truth gives us the rock we need to stand on in the flood.

**"Do not be deceived"** is literally, "Stop being deceived." Apparently, some of James' readers were already nibbling on Satan's bait: "If your God is good and loving, why is He letting you suffer? If He is omnipotent, He could stop it." James reminds them that God is both good and sovereign. He never sends anything evil into our lives. He only gives good gifts.

But, we need to define those **"good gifts"** from God's eternal, all-wise perspective and plan, not from our own shortsighted, temporal point of view. God sends trials for His own sovereign, loving purposes. Amos (Amos

3:6b) the prophet, asks, "If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?" Although it was Satan that directly attacked the godly Job, clearly he did it with God's full permission. When Job's wife told him to curse God and die, Job wisely answered (Job 2:10), "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" The apostle Paul came to see that his thorn in the flesh was a cause for rejoicing, because it kept him in humble dependence on God (2Co 12:7, 8, 9, 10). So the "good gifts" that God sends may include extremely difficult trials.

Whenever the Bible says, "**Do not be deceived**," we need to perk up and pay attention. This is an area where the enemy easily could fake you out. When we've traveled overseas, we've been warned about pickpockets, so we're especially on guard. I never put my wallet or passport in a pocket where it could be easily stolen. Being alert is the key to not getting ripped off. So when you face a difficult trial, be alert! The enemy will try to deceive you. ([James 1:16-18 Avoiding Deception in Trials](#))

**Hiebert** explains that...

The verse has a transitional function and, like a bridge, provides connections in both directions, but what has gone before seems primarily in view (Ed: See Cole's comments above which favor it transitioning into what follows).. The same formula occurs elsewhere to establish the rejection of a false opinion, as in 1Corinthians 6:9; 15:33, and Galatians 6:7 (**Ed**: All three examples are present imperative with a negative indicating they are to stop being deceived!)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived**; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals (1 Corinthians 6:9)

**Do not be deceived**: "Bad company corrupts good morals." (1 Corinthians 15:33)

**Do not be deceived**, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. (Galatians 6:7)

"It introduces an appeal to Christian consciousness and experience to confirm the writer's statement." To harbor the false concept that God tempts people is to cast grave suspicion on His character (**Ed**: It is to be deceived about God). It is a grievous doctrinal error that must have dangerous consequences for daily conduct. ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#))

All good from God, all evil from ourselves.  
Spurgeon

**Deceived** (4105)(**planao** from **plane** which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word "planet") means literally made to wander and so to go (active sense) or be led (passive sense as of sheep in Mt 18:12, 13) astray.

The **present imperative** with a negative signifies that the readers (plural) are to stop an action already progress (or don't let it begin). James is not suggesting but demanding that his readers must not succumb to the danger of being led astray!

Note that in this passage **planao** is in the **passive voice** which indicates an outside force or influence (e.g., in context presumably speaking to believers and so referring to the power of [Sin](#) [the Sin principle or propensity inherited from Adam] rendered ineffective [[Ro 6:6+](#)] but unfortunately still latent in believers - cf command in [Ro 6:12-13+](#)) is causing the deception that leads one down the wrong path regarding truth.

**Planao** - 39x in the NT - **NAS** renders **planao** as deceive(4), deceived(9), deceives(2), deceiving(2), go astray(1), gone astray(3), leads astray(2), led astray(1), misguided(1), mislead(4), misleads(2), misled(1), mistaken(3), straying(2), strays(1),wandering(1).

Matt. 18:12f; 22:29; 24:4f, 11, 24; Mk. 12:24, 27; 13:5f; Lk. 21:8; Jn. 7:12, 47; 1 Co. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:13; Tit. 3:3; Heb. 3:10; 5:2; 11:38; Jas. 1:16; 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:25; 2 Pet. 2:15; 1 Jn. 1:8; 2:26; 3:7; Rev. 2:20; 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10

In the present context, it is interesting that this command has virtually a "dual" application, **looking back** to the immediate context of deception regarding the source and potential consequences of temptation. Or **looking to** the following verses where James explains what God offers in place of temptation. In contrast to the "*gifts*" temptation offers, **God's gifts** are good and perfect (lacking nothing).

**THOUGHT** - Stop letting the [world](#), the [flesh](#) (the sinful desires of the flesh in light of James 1:14) and the [devil](#) try to "sell you" that they have something better than what God offers! And the only way to accomplish this is if "by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body." ([Ro 8:13+](#)) So may God grant that you are enabled to "**walk** ([present imperative](#)) by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the [flesh](#). ([Gal 5:16+](#)) See also the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" ([100/100](#))

**John Trapp** - Wander not, as wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 1:13, by seeking to father your faults upon God, as Adam did, Genesis 3:12.

**Literal wandering** is described in Hebrews 11:38+. **Spiritual wandering** is described in (1Pe 2:25+) In spiritual terms, **planao** means to be made to err from the right way, the highway of truth and holiness. Straying in the spiritual sense occurs when one **does not adhere to the truth** (James 5:19+) and/or **forsakes the right way** (see 2 Pe 2:15+)

**Matthew Henry** - Man in this his degenerate state is of a **straying nature**, thence compared to a lost sheep; this must be sought and brought back, and guided in the right way, Ps 119:176. ([See Spurgeon's Note](#)) He is weak, and ready to be imposed upon by the wiles and subtleties of Satan, and of men lying in wait to seduce and mislead.

**Clarke** writes that **deceived** is "erring - wandering from the right way in consequence of our ignorance, not knowing the right way; and, in consequence of our unbelief and obstinacy, not choosing to know it.

**Brethren** (80) (**adelphos** from collative **a** = denoting unity + **delphús** = womb) is literally one born from same womb and thus a male having the same father and mother as reference person. Figuratively, **adelphos** as in this verse refers to a close associate of a group of persons having well-defined membership, specifically here referring to those who have been brought forth by the word of truth and are, as it were, God's first fruits.

**Beloved** (27) (**agapetos** from **agapao** = love) means beloved, dear, very much loved. **Agapetos** is love called out of one's heart by preciousness of the object loved. Agapetos is used only of Christians as united with God or with each other in love.

**Hiebert - My dear brothers** is the first of three occurrences of this full address in James (James 1:19 ; James 2:5, cp James 1:1). The warning is prompted by his strong affectionate relationship to his readers. The verbal agapetoi, here rendered "dear," is more literally "beloved" and marks the close relationship between writer and readers. They are the recipients of his heartfelt love. As members of the family of God, they must not allow a false view of God to quench their filial relations to the Head of the Christian family. ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#))

**God the Father** uses this same word describing **Jesus the Son** declaring that

This is My **beloved** Son, in whom I am well-pleased. (Mt 3:17)

In fact the first 9 uses in the NT are of God the Father speaking of Christ, His beloved Son. This gives you some idea of the preciousness of the word "**beloved**"! This truth makes it even more incredible that Paul described the saints at Thessalonica (and by application all believers of all ages) as

brethren **beloved** (agapao) by God, His choice" (1 Th 1:4+).

**James 1:17** [Every good thing given](#) and [every perfect gift](#) is from [above](#), [coming down](#) from the [Father of lights](#), with [whom there is no variation or shifting shadow](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [pasa dosis agathe kai pan dorema teleion anochen estin](#), (3SPAI) [katabainon](#) (PAPNSN) [apo tou patros ton photon, par' o ouk eni](#) (3SPAI) [parallage e tropes aposkiasma](#).

**Amplified:** Every good gift and every perfect (free, large, full) gift is from above; it comes down from the Father of all [that gives] light, in [the shining of] Whom there can be no variation [rising or setting] or shadow cast by His turning [as in an eclipse]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** 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.

**NET:** All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.

**NIV:** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

**NLT:** Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** But every good endowment that we possess and every complete gift that we have received must come from above, from the Father of all lights, with whom there is never the slightest variation or shadow of

inconsistency. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the lights, with whom there can be no variableness nor shadow which is cast by the motion of turning.

**Young's Literal:** every good giving, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the lights, with whom is no variation, or shadow of turning;

**EVERY GOOD THING GIVEN AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE: pasa dosis agathe kai pan dorema teleion anothen estin, (3SPA1):**

- **Good** - James 1:5; 3:15,17; Genesis 41:16,38,39; Ex 4:11,12; 31:3, 4, 5, 6; 36:1,2; Nu 11:17,25; 1Chr 22:12; 29:19; 2Chr 1:11,12; Pr 2:6; Is 28:26; Da 2:21,22,27, 28, 29, 30; Mt 7:11; 11:25,26; 13:11,12; Lk 11:13; Jn 3:27; Acts 5:31; 11:18; Ro 6:23; 11:30; 12:6, 7, 8; 1Co 4:7; 12:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; Ep 2:3, 4, 5,8; 4:8, 9, 10, 11; Philippians 1:29; Titus 3:3, 4, 5; 1John 4:10; 5:11,12
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Literally this reads "every gift good and every give perfect from above is continually coming down".

In James 1:5 the author characterizes God as a giving God and here reiterates that attribute as he refutes the claim that God (a good gift giving God) could tempt men to sin. (James 1:13-15)

**Spurgeon** - Ascribe all evil to yourself, to the world, or to Satan; but ascribe all good unto God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift" — every grain of goodness, every trace of excellence that there is in the world, comes from him; but no evil ever comes from him.

**Vincent** adds that James' declaration in this passage writing that...

The statement that these **gifts** are from God is in pursuance of the idea that God does not tempt men to evil. The **gifts of God** are contrasted with the evil springing from man's lust.

**Every** ([3956](#)) (**pas**) means all without exception. Every good thing from the all good God (see His attributeGood)

**Good gift** - This identifies the giving as useful, profitable and beneficial in effect.

**Good** ([18](#)) (**agathos**) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good). Good and doing good is the idea. Agathos describes that which is beneficial in addition to being good. **Agathos** is that which is good in its character, beneficial in its effects and/or useful in its action.

**Agathos** is used in the New Testament primarily of spiritual and moral excellence. Paul uses agathos to describe the gospel as the "glad tidings of **good** things" (Ro 10:15-note). The writer of Hebrews uses it in the same way, of "the **good** things to come" of which "Christ appeared as a high priest" (He 9:11-note) and of which the law was "only a shadow" (He 10:1-note).

The precise meaning of **agathos** can be difficult to appreciate and distinguish from **kalos** ([2570](#)) an adjective that is also translated good. An attempt is made in the following discussion to bring out the difference, but in some verses where both are used, this distinction can be difficult to appreciate.

**Given** ([1394](#)) (**dosis** from **didomi** = to give) is a word which means giving and stresses the act of giving, either a human or a divine gift. Dosis is very common in financial transactions. **Dosis** adds the suffix of action to the verb root, means the act of giving, while **dorema** adds the suffix -ma, denoting the result of giving and hence the thing given or the gift itself.

Here is the only other NT uses of **dosis**...

And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone (see note Philippians 4:15)

There are four uses of **dosis** in the Lxx (Ge 47:22; Pr 21:14; 25:14)

**Perfect** ([5046](#)) (**teleios** from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal) means complete, mature, fully developed, full grown, brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, in good working order. **Teleios** signifies consummate

soundness, and includes the idea of being whole.

**Teleios** - 19x in the NT - Matt. 5:48; 19:21; Rom. 12:2; 1 Co. 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:14; 9:11; Jas. 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:18. The NAS renders teleios as complete(2), mature(4), more perfect(1), perfect(12).

**Vincent** notes that James uses perfect to enlarge...

upon good, bringing out more distinctly the moral quality of the gift.

**Teleios** has at least three shades of meaning: (1) **Teleios** speaks of totality, as opposed to partial or limited and when used of things means in full measure, undivided, complete or entire (as in Romans 12:2 [note] referring to "the will of God" which is "good and acceptable and perfect"). (2) **Teleios** also speaks of that which is fully development as opposed to that which is immature. (3) **Teleios** can refer to that which is in a state of full preparation or readiness.

**MacDonald** applies this truth writing that God's...

gifts are as perfect as Himself. Therefore it is unthinkable that He would ever entice man to sin. Temptation comes from man's own evil nature. Let us test our faith on the subject of unholy temptations. Do we encourage evil thoughts to linger in our minds, or do we expel them quickly? When we sin, do we say that we couldn't help it? Do we blame God when we are tempted to sin? (borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Every perfect gift** - Perfect identifies the gift as lacking nothing for completeness and thus lacking nothing to meet the needs of the recipients.

**Hiebert** explains that...

Although all good gifts that men enjoy come from God, the context suggests that James is thinking specifically of His gifts "with special reference to their action on the soul of man; for he is exhibiting the truth which stands opposed to the error that God is the author of sin." ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#))

**Gift** (1434) (**dorema** from **dorea** = free gift with emphasis on gratuitous nature + **-ma** = the result of giving [dosis]) is the thing given or that which is granted. Dorema is used in only one other NT passage (Ro 5:16-note).

**Vincent** notes that

**Dorema** enlarges slightly upon the other word in emphasizing the gift as free, large, full; an idea which is further developed in verse 18, of his own will.

**James Philip** said that...

The best defence against the temptation to stray from God is the possession by experience of His rich gifts that meet all desires.

**Is** ([estin](#)) in the **present tense** emphasizes that it is continually from above which is reiterated by the use of '**coming down**' also in the **present tense**.

**From above** (509) (**anohen**) means from a higher place or a from a source that is above.

**Anohen** - 13x in the NT - Matt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Lk. 1:3; Jn. 3:3, 7, 31; 19:11, 23; Acts 26:5; Gal. 4:9; Jas. 1:17; 3:15, 17.

The **NAS** renders **anohen** as again(2), all over(1), beginning(1), from above(5), from the long time(1), top(2).

## COMING DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS: katabainon (PAPNSN) apo tou patros ton photon:

- **Father** - Genesis 1:2, 3, 4, 5,14,15; Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalms 19:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; 84:11; Is 45:7; 60:19; John 1:9; John 8:12; 2Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 1:18; 1John 1:5; Revelation 21:23; 22:5
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Coming down** (2597) (**katabaino** from **katá** = down + **baíno** = go) means to come or go down or to descend from a higher to a lower place. **Katabaino** describes God descending to afford aid to the oppressed in Acts...

I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt, and have heard their groans, and I have **come down** to deliver them; come now, and I will send you to Egypt.' (Acts 7:34 from Ex. 3:8)



The **present tense** indicates that these good things are continually coming down. God is the ultimate Giver. We as saved sinners are the benefactors of amazing grace, for He gives and gives and gives, independent of any merit on our part. This is a humbling truth, that should generate within us a deep sense of gratitude as recipients who are not worthy of such good and perfect gifts. O, the deep, deep love of God! Let His unconditional, boundless love, motivate us as His children to quickly, willingly obey His Spirit's voice.

**Katabaino** - 81x in the NT - **NAS** renders **katabaino** as brought down(1), came down(10), come down(16), comes down(4), coming(1), coming down(9), descend(3), descended(9), descending(5), descends(1), falling down(1), go down(4), go downstairs(1), going down(3), got out of(1), steps(1), steps down(1), went down(12).

Matt. 3:16; 7:25, 27; 8:1; 11:23; 14:29; 17:9; 24:17; 27:40, 42; 28:2; Mk. 1:10; 3:22; 9:9; 13:15; 15:30, 32; Lk. 2:51; 3:22; 6:17; 8:23; 9:54; 10:15, 30f; 17:31; 18:14; 19:5f; 22:44; Jn. 1:32f, 51; 2:12; 3:13; 4:47, 49, 51; 5:7; 6:16, 33, 38, 41f, 50f, 58; Acts 7:15, 34; 8:15, 26, 38; 10:11, 20f; 11:5; 14:11, 25; 16:8; 18:22; 20:10; 23:10; 24:1, 22; 25:6f; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:9f; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jas. 1:17; Rev. 3:12; 10:1; 12:12; 13:13; 16:21; 18:1; 20:1, 9; 21:2, 10

**Father of lights** ([patros ton photon](#)) - Probably refers to God as the Creator of all light, both heavenly and spiritual.

**Hiebert - Lights** in the original has the definite article, "**the lights**," and the primary reference is to the well-known celestial lights, the heavenly luminaries that are the sources of light for our earth. As "**the Father**" of these lights, God is their source of being, and they reflect the glory of their Creator (Ps 19:1; 136:7). As their Creator and Sustainer, He is not to be identified with them. These luminous celestial bodies must not be worshiped as God, but they testify to the Creator's luminous nature. Their glory and dignity declare the nature and essence of God, that "God is light" (1 John 1:5). He is also the Father of all our spiritual illumination (2Co 4:6). ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#))

The **Psalmist** writes...

To Him who made the great lights, for His lovingkindness is everlasting: (Ps 136:7)

**Vincent** feels that **lights** in this phrase refers to...

the heavenly bodies. Compare Ps. 135:7 (Sept.) and Jer 4:23 (Sept.). God is called "the Father of the lights," as being their creator and maintainer. Compare Job 38:28 = "*Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?*"; Ps. 8:3; Amos 5:8.

Temptations come to lead us into darkness, which is a stark contrast with the essence of the Father, Who is perfect Light. As His children who seek to genuine

**Steven Cole** feels that in this section James is still speaking in the context of **trials** and states that...

**To avoid deception in trials, affirm God's goodness** (Jas 1:17). When Satan originally tempted and deceived Eve, he did it by getting her to doubt God's goodness. He said (Ge 3:1), "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" Of course, God had not said that, and Eve corrected Satan. But he persisted with his lie (Ge 3:4, 5), "You shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The implication was, "God is holding back something good from you. Therefore, God Himself is not good." She fell for this line of deception, and you know the terrible consequences.

So James affirms here (Jas 1:17), for people going through trials, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." James probably repeats himself as a matter of literary style, combining Hebrew parallelism with a Greek poetic form, the hexameter. There is no significant difference between the "good thing given" and the "perfect gift." Perfect is one of James' favorite words. It has the nuance of mature. He used it twice in Jas 1:4, "And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." So Jas 1:17 ties back to verses Jas 1:2, 3, 4, with the idea that trials are one of God's perfect gifts, because when we persevere in them, He uses them to produce spiritual maturity in us.

James' point is that these good and perfect gifts, along with all of the many good things that God gives us to enjoy—the taste of good food, the love of our families, the beauty of His creation, and every wonderful experience in life—all of these good things come to us from a God whose very nature is good. As the Psalmist proclaims (Ps. 119:67, 68), "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. You are good and do good; teach me Your statutes."



James states that all of the good things we experience come “down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” This is the only time that God is called, “**the Father of lights.**” It refers to the fact that He created light and the heavenly bodies that give off light. Light stands for that which is good, in contrast to Satan’s evil domain of darkness (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12, 13).

“**Father**” points not only to God’s creative power, but also to His tender care for His creatures. When James says that with the Father of lights, “there is no variation or shifting shadow,” he is drawing a comparison with the sun. Like the sun, God does not vary in His essential nature, which is light. He always steadily is light. He is always good. But, on earth we do not always experience the steady light of the sun. It varies on cloudy days, at night, and with the changing seasons. James means that when we experience what seem to be cloudy days or dark nights or wintry seasons, do not make the mistake of thinking that God has changed in His essential goodness towards us. His nature and His purpose towards His children are steady and unchanging. Therefore, we can trust Him at all times and in every difficult circumstance.

This has two practical applications:

(Ed: See Summary Chart - The Attributes of God **and** Spurgeon on the Attributes of God)

### **(1) Understanding Gods attributes as revealed in His Word is essential for your spiritual well being.**

You must know God, not as you may conceive Him to be or wish Him to be, but as He has revealed Himself in the Bible. I’ve heard professing Christians say, “My God is not a God of judgment; He’s a God of love.” That’s nice, but your God is not the God of the Bible! He is a figment of your own imagination! The God of the Bible is both a God of judgment and of love. Or, there are Christians who dodge a difficult chapter like Romans 9, where Paul says of God (Ro 9:18), “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.” They don’t want to conceive of God as having the sovereign right to save whom He chooses and to harden others in their sin. But to dodge what the Bible says about God is to make God in your own image, which is idolatry.

Two things will help you understand God’s attributes. First, read the Bible over and over, asking as you read, “What does this teach me about You, God?” Second, read some good books on the attributes of God. J. I. Packer’s classic, *Knowing God* [IVP] is a good place to start. A. W. Pink’s *The Attributes of God* [Baker] is brief, but good. A. W. Tozer’s *The Knowledge of the Holy* [Harper & Row] is a bit mystical, but worth reading. Stephen Charnock’s *The Existence and Attributes of God* [Baker] is wordy, but a gold mine. He spends 146 pages on the goodness of God (2:209-355). Any good systematic theology (Charles Hodge, Louis Berkhof, Wayne Grudem, Robert Reymond, etc.) will have a section on God’s attributes. There are also some excellent easy-to-read books on various attributes of God, such as R. C. Sproul’s *The Holiness of God* [Tyndale], A. W. Pink’s *The Sovereignty of God* [Banner of Truth], or John MacArthur’s *The Love of God* [Word]. Understanding God’s attributes will give you a firm footing

when you encounter trials.

### **(2) Interpreting your circumstances in light of God’s attributes is essential for your spiritual well being.**

You must know God, but then when trials hit, you have to process what you know in light of your difficult situation. By faith, you have to rehearse for yourself what you know to be true, maybe a hundred times a day.

The psalms are full of this type of thing. The psalmist is in a huge crisis. He rehearses for himself what he knows about God’s character and His covenant promises. By the end of the psalm his circumstances haven’t changed, but his attitude and emotions have changed dramatically, because he has interpreted his circumstances in light of who God is. For example, in Psalms 42 and Ps 43, there is a refrain, where the psalmist talks to himself. Three times he asks (Ps 43:5; see also, Ps 42:5, 11), “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me?” He answers himself (Ps 43:5), “Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.” When you’re in the emotional throes of a major trial, you have to do this by faith in God’s Word, not by your feelings. Your feelings will be all over the chart, but your faith must rest on the facts about God as declared in His Word of truth: He is good! ([James 1:16-18 Avoiding Deception in Trials](#))

**WITH WHOM THERE IS NO VARIATION OR SHIFTING SHADOW: par’ o ouk eni (3SPA) parallage e tropes aposkiasma**

- Nu 23:19; 1Sa 15:29; Ps 122:6; Is 46:10; Mal 3:6; Ro 11:29; Heb 1:11,12; 13:8

- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Wuest** = there can be no variableness nor shadow which is cast by the motion of turning

**No** (3756) (**ou**) indicates absolute negation! He changeth not. He is the unchanging One (Mal 3:6, Heb 13:8). In a world that is spiritually speaking "upside down" and morally "topsy turvy" it is good to have a God Who is neither, instead being the epitome of immutability, an immutability which is in fact infinite. Glory!

**Lord Sabaoth, His Name,  
From age to age the same  
([praise Him](#))**

**Variation** (3883) (**parallage** from **para** = beside, near + **allasso** = to change) (Only NT use) (English = "parallax," the difference between the directions of a body as seen from two different points) refers to a transmission from one condition to another. **Parallage** denotes a change or variation from an established course or pattern.

**Vincent** writes that **parallage** "is not used, as some suppose, in a technical, astronomical sense, which James' readers would not have understood, but in the simple sense of change in the degree or intensity of light, such as is manifested by the heavenly bodies."

**Barclay** - What he is stressing is the unchangeableness of God. To do so he uses two astronomical terms. The word he uses for changeableness is **parallage**, and the word for the turn of the shadow is **trope**. Both these words have to do with the variation which the heavenly bodies show, the variation in the length of the day and of the night, the apparent variation in the course of the sun, the phases of waxing and waning, the different brilliance at different times of the stars and the planets. Variability is characteristic of all created things. God is the Creator of the lights of heaven--the sun, the moon, the stars. The Jewish morning prayer says, "Blessed be the Lord God who hath formed the lights." The lights change but He who created them never changes. ([James 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Shifting** (5157) (**trope** from the verb **trepo** = to turn) (Only NT use) describes literally a turning as of the planets in their orbits, but here used figuratively to depict the immutability or unchangeableness of our God.

**MacArthur** - From man's perspective, the celestial bodies have different phases of movement and rotation, change from day to night, and vary in intensity and shadow. But God does not follow that pattern—He is changeless (cf. Mal 3:6; 1Jn 1:5). (MacArthur study Bible : New American Standard Bible)

**Spurgeon** - There is variableness and there is the shadow of turning in the sun, but in that greater Father of lights there is neither parallax nor tropic; he is evermore the same, and we may go to him with unwavering confidence because he is the same. Oh! what a blessing to such changing creatures as we are to have an unchanging God! "Of his own will." If you want to know the power of God's will, it never goes towards evil.

**Thomas Manton** - This is an astronomical term, taken from the heavenly bodies, which have many revolutions. The heavenly lights have their vicissitudes, eclipses, and decreases; but our sun always shines with the same brightness and glory. **Like shifting shadows**. The allusion continues. Stars, according to their different light and position, have various shadowings. The nearer the sun is to us, the less shadow it casts; the farther off, the greater the shadow. So we know the sun's movements by its different shadows. But with the Father of spiritual lights there is no shadow of turning; that is, he does not change but always remains the same. This is a sun that does not set or rise and cannot be overcast or eclipsed. ([A Practical Exposition of James - James 1:16, James 1:17; James 1:18](#))

Another source says that...

The shadow of turning refers to the sun which eclipses, and turns, and casts its shadow. It rises and sets, appears and disappears every day; and it comes out of one tropic, and enters into another at certain seasons of the year. But with God, who is light itself, there is no darkness at all, there is no change, nor anything like it. He is unchangeable in His nature, perfections, purposes, promises, and gifts. He being holy, cannot turn to that which is evil; nor can He, who is the fountain of light, be the cause of darkness, and since every good and perfect gift comes from Him, evil cannot proceed from him, nor can he tempt any to it. The Bible is very clear that God does not change, neither His mind, His will, nor His nature. (Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered)

**Jon Courson** is very practical - Not only is God good in the gifts He gives, but in who He is. In Him there is no variableness or shadow of turning. That is, He's not moody. He doesn't have bad days. He's not generous with me one day, but grouchy the next—

as I can so often be. We're variable. We go up and down. God doesn't. He can be nothing but good. He doesn't react to me according to how I'm doing with Him. He is faithful when I am faithless (2Timothy 2:13). He is good when I am grumpy. He doesn't change. He's locked into His nature. That's why I love the Lord so much. He's solid as a Rock. And I can just enjoy Him without worrying about Him being ticked with me or tired of me. He gives nothing but good gifts, for He is a good God. (Jon Courson's Application Commentary).

**Shadow** (644) (**aposkiasma** from **apó** = from + **skiázo** = to shade) (Only NT use) is a shadow that is cast. It is literally the shade cast by an object blocking rays of light from the sun or other source.

Unlike the heavenly bodies, which undergo continual changes, variableness is absolutely not part of the character of God.

**Hiebert** ties this in with the previous section of James writing that...

There is never any dimming of the light of God's holiness that would make it possible for Him to become the tempter of men. ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

**Kistemaker** - As the earth, sun, moon, and stars move in their ordained courses, we observe the interplay of light and darkness, day and night, the longest and the shortest day of the year, the waning and the waxing of the moon, eclipses, and the movement of the planets. Nature is subject to variation and change. Not so with God! (Simon J. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John)

**Vincent** - This is popularly understood to mean that there is in God not the faintest hint or shade of change, like the phrase, a shadow of suspicion. But the Greek has no such idiom, and that is not James' meaning. Rev., rightly, renders, shadow tact is cast by turning; referring still to the heavenly orbs, which cast shadows in their revolution, as when the moon turns her dark side to us, or the sun is eclipsed by the body of the moon.

**TDNT** feels that **aposkiasma** refers " to the darkness caused on earth by the movement of heavenly bodies."

**THOUGHT** - Is your personal world "shaky" or "shaking"? Then take a moment dearly beloved of the Almighty One and sing loud Hosanna's (Hebrew = Save us now, We pray, -- Ps 118:25, Mt 21:9) to His Name, Who from age to age is the same...

#### [OUR GOD, OUR HELP IN AGES PAST](#)

by Isaac Watts

([Piano/choir version](#))

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,  
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting Thou art God,  
**To endless years the same.**

Thy Word commands our flesh to dust,  
"Return, ye sons of men:"  
All nations rose from earth at first,  
And turn to earth again.

A thousand ages in Thy sight  
Are like an evening gone;  
Short as the watch that ends the night  
Before the rising sun.

The busy tribes of flesh and blood,  
With all their lives and cares,  
Are carried downwards by the flood,  
And lost in following years.

Time, like an ever rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly, forgotten, as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.

Like flowery fields the nations stand  
Pleased with the morning light;  
The flowers beneath the mower's hand  
Lie withering ere 'tis night.

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.

James 1:18 **In the exercise** of His **will** He **brought** us **forth** by the **word** of **truth**, **so** that we would be a **kind** of **first fruits** among His **creatures**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [bouletheis](#) (APPMSN) [apekuesen](#) (3SAAI) [hemas logo aletheias, eis to einai](#) (PAN) [hemas aparchen tina ton autou ktismaton](#).

**Amplified:** And it was of His own [free] will that He gave us birth [as sons] by [His] Word of Truth, so that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures [a sample of what He created to be consecrated to Himself]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

**NET:** By his sovereign plan he gave us birth through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

**NLT:** In his goodness he chose to make us his own children by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his choice possession. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** By his own wish he made us his own sons through the Word of truth that we might be, so to speak, the first specimens of his new creation ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** In accordance with His deliberate purpose He brought us into being by means of the word of truth, resulting in our being a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

**Young's Literal:** having counselled, He did beget us with a word of truth, for our being a certain first-fruit of His creatures.

**IN THE EXERCISE OF HIS WILL HE BROUGHT US FORTH BY THE WORD OF TRUTH:** [bouletheis](#) (APPMSN) [apekuesen](#) (3SAAI) [hemas logo aletheias](#):

- Jn 1:13; 3:3, 4, 5; Ro 4:17; 8:29, 30, 31; 9:15, 16, 17, 18; Ep 2:4,5; Col 1:20,21; 2Thes 2:13,14; 1Peter 1:3,23
- **by the Word** - 1Co 4:15 Eph 1:12 1Pe 1:23 1Jn 3:9
- [See comments on the New Birth](#) in John 3:3
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Jas 1:21+ Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

James continues his discussion of the generous goodness of God as he now associates it with the best gift of all, the new birth or our regeneration by the Spirit. This gift indeed far "outshines" the lights of heaven he has just alluded to in verse 17.

James had just described God as the **Father** of lights and now proceeds to explain how God is the **Father** of believers.

Once again in this passage we see the vital importance of the Word of God, the **Word of truth** in bringing about the new birth. How God's people need to return to His Word of truth which saves us not just the first time (justification) but also saves us daily (sanctification as applied by the Holy Spirit).

**Jamieson** agrees that James links this verse with **every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift** noting that...

The believer's regeneration is the highest example of nothing but good proceeding from God.

**Exercise of His will (1014) (boulomai)** describes a settled desire emanating from one's reason not from one's emotion. This verb connotes more than just wanting a desire or wish to be fulfilled, and can include the idea of choosing one thing over another. **Boulomai** expresses also the inward predisposition and bent from which active volition proceeds and it is never used of evil people.

This verb **boulomai** is in the aorist tense (timeless but in context speaks of a completed action) and is a participle (a verbal adjective often ending in "-ing") so that it can be translated more literally as "**having made His decision**" emphasizing that God acted freely, purposely and graciously. The fact that this verb is emphatically placed first in the Greek sentence makes His will the prominent operator and cause of our regeneration.

**Boulomai** - 37x in the NT - **NAS** renders **boulomai** as am unwilling\*(1), desire(2), desired(1), desires(1), desiring(1), desirous(1), intend(1),intended(2), intending(2), like(1), want(7), wanted(2), wanting(2), will(1), willing(3), wills(3), wish(1), wished(1),wishes(1), wishing(3).

Matt. 1:19; 11:27; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 10:22; 22:42; Jn. 18:39; Acts 5:28, 33; 12:4; 15:37; 17:20; 18:15, 27; 19:30; 22:30; 23:28; 25:20, 22; 27:43; 28:18; 1 Co. 12:11; 2 Co. 1:15, 17; Phil. 1:12; 1 Tim. 2:8; 5:14; 6:9; Tit. 3:8; Philemon 1:13; Heb. 6:17; Jas. 1:18; 3:4; 4:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Jn. 1:12; 3 Jn. 1:10; Jude 1:5

**Robertson** says **boulomai** indicates "God as Father acted deliberately of set purpose."

**Jamieson** writes that this speaks "Of his own good pleasure (which shows that it is God's essential nature to do good, not evil), not induced by any external cause."

**TDNT** writes that **boulomai** means "To prefer," suggesting volition, seems to be the original sense, then "to wish," "to purpose," or, more weakly, "to think"...It can still denote the **will of God**, the Son, or the Spirit (seven times). Thus it expresses God's eternal purpose in Heb 6:17 (note), his will to save in 2Pet 3:9 (note), his will to give new life in James 1:18, his sovereign counsel in Lk 22:42. Christ's own will (in execution of God's counsel) is the issue in Mt 11:27 (Lk. 10:22). The Spirit controls the distribution of gifts, according to 1Co 12:11. (borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

In context, James explains what prompted a Holy God to save sinners who are unholy into saints who are holy! It was His choice (**Related Ref:** ekletos; Chosen in Christ). It was by His free will. It had nothing to do with our merit. He was not forced by anyone to save anyone. It is a reflection of His marvelous, magnanimous grace upon grace. Let us stop and offer up a sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15+) for so great a salvation (Heb 2:3+).

**Hiebert** - Sin brought death (James 1:25+), but God resolutely willed not to let us perish in sin. His deliberate will to save us was not forced by any outside necessity. Having willed it, God acted freely to save us—a fact wholly inconsistent with the claim that God tempts an individual to sin. ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

As **William MacDonald** aptly explains "His love to us was unmerited, unbought and unsought. It was entirely voluntary on His part. This should cause us to worship! (borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Matthew Poole** writes that **exercise of His will** means "out of his mere good pleasure, as the original cause, and not moved to it by any dignity or merit in us (Matthew Poole. Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

We see similar description of God's **exercise of His will** in our salvation in **Paul's** letter to Timothy where he spoke of God...

Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to His own purpose and grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity (before time began!) (2 Ti 1:9+)

**Brought us forth (616) (apekueo** from **apo** = from, used with the sense of "to cease from" + **kuéo** = swell, be pregnant) means to "cease from" pregnancy and thus literally describes the birthing process. To bring forth from the womb. To beget, to bear, to give birth (See [New Birth](#)).

It is notable that **apekueo** is never used for creation, so that James is not explaining the creation of a living human race in general, but the re-creation (redemption) of a spiritually dead human race.

**Brought forth** in the **aorist tense** in context speaks of a once for all action in the past, an accomplished act, a completed new birth (indicative mood = it was a real event) at the time of our conversion when spiritual new life became a historical reality. This truth is a direct assault on the aberrant teaching that one can lose their "new birth"! How could we be "unbegat" or "unbirthed"?

As **Hiebert** rightly states...

In this epistle, James emphatically calls for Christian conduct as proof of the reality of our new birth, but he clearly insists that this new life must first be wrought in us by God. ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#))

There is an striking contrast in the two births James describes in this section, the first beginning with **lust** and ending in **death** (Jas 1:14-15), and the second beginning with **light** (Father of lights) and ending in **life!**

**The UBS Handbook** notes that "The verb "to give birth" is normally used of a mother giving birth to a child. It is interesting to observe that here God takes on a feminine role by giving new birth to Christians (**Ed**: He is however not implying that God is feminine.). The verb here is the same as the one used in verse 15 and is meant to contrast with that use: there sin gives birth to death, and here God gives birth to spiritual life for Christians. ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series](#))

In his **Gospel**, **John** teaches about the close association of **light and life** writing that...

In Him (Jesus) was **life**, and the **life** was the **light** of men. And the **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it... There was the true **light** which, coming into the world, enlightens every man... (Jesus declared) "I am the **light** of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the **light of life**... While you have the **light**, believe in the **light**, in order that you may become sons of **light**... I have come as **light** into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. (John 1:4, 5, [9±](#); Jn 8:12, 12:36, 46)

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, have you come to the Light of the World that you might experience the light of life?

**Robertson** comments that in context **apekueo** speaks of...

Regeneration, not birth of all men, though God is the Father in the sense of creation of all men (Acts 17:28, 29ff+.).

The 2 NT uses are both figurative, James 1:15 below personifying Sin as producing or bringing forth its vile offspring, death.

Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it **brings forth** death. (James 1:15+)

**Apekueo** in James 1:18 is in dramatic contrast to the only other NT use by James, for here we see God begets new life in sinners who are dead in their trespasses and sins.

**John** wrote that...

as many as received Him (Jesus the Messiah), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were **born** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God**. (John 1:12-13±)

**Paul** wrote to the Ephesian believers explaining that...

In Him, you also, after listening to the **message** (rhema) **of truth, the gospel of your salvation**-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph 1:13+)

**Peter** presents a similar begetting of believers initiated by **the Word** explaining to his readers that...

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to **His great mercy has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1Pe 1:3+)

**Peter** went on to explain later in this same chapter...

you have been **born again** (anagennao) not of **seed** which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the **living and abiding word of God**. (1Pe 1:23+)



**John** in a very important NT passage, also speaks of this **new birth** and its radical effect on new creatures in Christ (2Cor 5:17) writing that...

No (ou = absolute negation) one who is born (gennao) of God practices (**present tense** = as their lifestyle; sure, believers still sin but if that is their lifestyle and there has never been any significant change after they said the "accepted Jesus" or "believed in Jesus", then one needs to be very concerned that this person is deceiving themselves as the rest of this verse amply explains! As an aside there are some in evangelical circles who have propounded the absurd teaching that one can express belief in Jesus and live the rest of their life just as they did before Jesus. This is a lie according to the apostle John, et al NT writers. Don't believe it no matter how many degrees those possess who spue out this deadly doctrine of demons) sin, because His seed abides (**present tense** = continually) in him; and he cannot (literally = "is not able" where not = ou signifying absolutely not and "able" also in the **present tense**, speaks of inherent ability - this born again one absolutely and continually has no inherent ability to commit sin as his or her way of life!) sin (**present tense** = habitually, as if nothing had changed in his heart. A new creature in Christ won't be perfect and may have seasons of sin but the indwelling Spirit is holy and He will cause one to tend toward holiness rather than toward unholiness. Do not be deceived!), because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9+ [See also comments on the New Birth](#) in John 3:3)

**Word** (3056) (**logos** from **lego** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. In Scripture Jesus is the Divine Logos (John 1:1). In this context James is referring to the living power of the living word (Heb 4:12-note; 1Pe 1:23) of Scripture to bring forth spiritual life in one who is spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-note). In that sense, the phrase **word of truth** speaks of the **gospel** for as Paul taught this word has the intrinsic power to bring about a new birth. Thus Paul wrote...

I am not ashamed of the gospel (euaggelion), for it is the **power** (dunamis = speaks of inherent power of the Gospel message - this is good news dear believer - it is not how clever you present the message that gives it power - it has its own intrinsic power - so simply present it as the Spirit leads and provides wonderful opportunities to do so. And be blessed knowing that you have spoken forth the most hope filled words that person will ever hear. I pray that the seed you sow brings them forth as first fruit.) of God for salvation (soteria) to everyone who believes (pisteuo), to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Ro 1:16-note) (For more discussion of the encouraging truth regarding the inherent fruit bearing power of the Gospel word of truth - Col 1:5, 6 - see notes on Col 1:5; 6)

**Word of truth** (five times in NAS)

Ps 119:43-note And do not take the **word of truth** utterly out of my mouth, For I wait for Thine ordinances.

**Spurgeon:** The word of truth cannot be a joy to our mouths unless we have an experience of it in our lives, and it may be wise for us to be silent if We cannot support our testimonies by the verdict of our consciousness. This prayer may also refer to other modes by which we may be disabled from speaking in the name of the Lord: as, for instance, by our falling into open sin, by our becoming depressed and despairing, by our labouring under sickness or mental aberration, by our finding no door of utterance, or meeting with no willing audience. He who has once preached the gospel from his heart is filled with horror at the idea of being put out of the ministry; he will crave to be allowed a little share in the holy testimony, and will reckon his dumb Sabbaths to be days of banishment and punishment.

2Cor 6:7 in the **word of truth**, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

Col 1:5-note because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the **word of truth**, the gospel,

2Ti 2:15-note Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the **word of truth**.

James 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

The Word or the Message marked by or **characterized by truth** (genitive as appositional) or a message which **proclaims truth** (genitive as objective). This is the divine means used in our regeneration. The **word of truth** is a direct reference to the **Gospel** (cf Col 1:5-note), a message that embodies the divine truth of God in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. As we proclaim the Gospel



in the power of the Spirit, God's message effects regeneration in the hearts of those who hear and receive the truth. We see this pattern in the following cross references...

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ**. (see note **Romans 10:17**)

For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the **gospel**. (**1 Cor. 4:15**)

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the **word of God's message**, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. (see note **1Thes 2:13**)

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the **living and abiding word of God**. For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER." And this is the **word** which was preached to you. (see notes **1 Peter 1:23; 24; 25**).

### **There is no substitute for the proclamation of the Gospel.**

**Jamieson** agrees that **word of truth** is a synonym for "the **Gospel** (which is) the objective means, as **faith** is the appropriating means of regeneration by the **Holy Spirit**, as the efficient Agent."

**Matthew Poole** writes that...

The **word of truth** the gospel, so called, either:

1. By a usual Hebraism, from the true word; or:
  2. By way of eminency, as containing the most excellent and necessary of all truths, the doctrine of righteousness and life by Jesus Christ; or:
  3. With respect to the law and its shadows, the truth and substance of which is held forth in the gospel.
- (Matthew Poole. Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

**Of truth** ([225](#)) (**aletheia** from **a** = without + **lêthô** = that which is hidden or concealed, the combination meaning out in open) is the the unconcealed reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. It literally describes that which is contains nothing hidden.

**Aletheia** - 109x in the NT - **NAS** renders **aletheia** as certainly(1), most certainly(1), rightly(1), truly(2), truth(104).

Matt. 22:16; Mk. 5:33; 12:14, 32; Lk. 4:25; 20:21; 22:59; Jn. 1:14, 17; 3:21; 4:23f; 5:33; 8:32, 40, 44ff; 14:6, 17; 15:26; 16:7, 13; 17:17, 19; 18:37f; Acts 4:27; 10:34; 26:25; Rom. 1:18, 25; 2:2, 8, 20; 3:7; 9:1; 15:8; 1 Co. 5:8; 13:6; 2 Co. 4:2; 6:7; 7:14; 11:10; 12:6; 13:8; Gal. 2:5, 14; 5:7; Eph. 1:13; 4:21, 24f; 5:9; 6:14; Phil. 1:18; Col. 1:5f; 2Th 2:10, 12f; 1 Tim. 2:4, 7; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:15, 18, 25; 3:7f; 4:4; Tit. 1:1, 14; Heb. 10:26; Jas. 1:18; 3:14; 5:19; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:12; 2:2; 1 Jn. 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21; 3:18f; 4:6; 5:6; 2 Jn. 1:1ff; 3 Jn. 1:1, 3f, 8, 12.

The basic understanding of **aletheia** is that it is the manifestation of a hidden reality. For example, when you are a witness in a trial, the attendant says "Raise your right hand. Do you swear that you will tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?" And you say, "I do" and you sit down. The question is asking "Are you willing to come into this courtroom and manifest something that is hidden to us that only you know so that you will bear evidence to that?" And when you do speak the truth, you are manifesting a hidden reality.

**Truth** then is the correspondence between a reality and a declaration which professes to set it forth. To say it another way, words are true when they correspond with objective reality. Persons and things are true when they correspond with their profession. Hence a truth is a declaration which has corresponding reality, or a reality which is correctly set forth. Since God is Himself the great reality, that which correctly sets forth His nature is pre-eminently the **Truth**. Thus **truth** is the property of being in accord with fact or reality as defined by God. Whatever God says is true and therefore is worthy of one's trust.

**TDNT** explains the origin of this word this way...

Etymologically **aletheia** means "nonconcealment." It thus denotes what is seen, indicated, expressed, or disclosed, i.e., a thing as it really is, not as it is concealed or falsified. **aletheia** is "the real state of affairs," e.g., the truth in law, or real events in history, or true being in philosophy... **aletheia** is "that which has certainty and

force"... aletheia is "that on which one can rely"... aletheia is "the state of affairs as disclosed"... aletheia is "truth of statement" used with speaking (Lk. 4:25) or teaching (Mk. 12:14)... aletheia is "true teaching or faith" (2Co 13:8; 4:2; Gal. 5:7; 1Pe 1:22) (borrow [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**Paul** uses the same phrase **word of truth** in his defense of his ministry so that it might not be discredited but that...

in everything commending (the idea is Paul and his associates introduced themselves as in the description that follows - the connotation is with the objective of proving their authenticity) ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses... 7 in **the word of truth** (the Gospel), in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left (2Cor 6:4,7)

**SO THAT WE WOULD BE A KIND OF FIRST FRUITS AMONG HIS CREATURES: eis to einai (PAN) hemas aparchen tina ton autou ktismaton:**

- Lev 23:10 Jer 2:3 Am 6:1 Heb 12:23 Rev 14:4
- [See comments on the New Birth](#) in John 3:3
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BELIEVERS ARE GOD'S FIRST FRUITS

**So that** (1519)(eis) is a preposition that primarily conveys the idea of motion into something (most often translated "into" or "unto") but is used here to introduce the purpose of God's begetting us by His Word of truth.

**THOUGHT** - Always be alert for phrases such as "so that" (975 occurrences in NAS) and use these as opportunities for a divine encounter with your Teacher, the Spirit, as you ask questions like "what purpose?", "why?", etc, (5W/H questions) in effect carrying out a "mini-Meditation" on the Scripture. (See [terms of purpose or result](#))

**Spurgeon** - It is a very delightful idea that we are presented to God as "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." There is a whole harvest behind us, as Paul also reminds us in Romans 8:19-21 : "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

**We would be** (einai) is the **present tense** of eimi (to be, to exist) speaks of their continual existence.

**Kind** (5100)(tis) generally is translated some one or a certain one.

**Vincent** writes that in the present context tis is translated kind and serves to indicate "the **figurative nature of the term** (first fruits). The figure is taken from the requirement of the Jewish law that the first-born of men and cattle, and the first growth of fruits and grain should be consecrated to the Lord. The point of the illustration is that Christians, like first-fruits, should be consecrated to God."

**Hiebert** - God's regenerating work in believers looked forward to a glorious goal: "that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created." "**That we might be**" indicates purpose, but that does not imply that the purpose is as yet unrealized. The divine purpose that we should be His first fruits was fulfilled. The new birth that the readers, along with James, have experienced has given them the position and character as "first fruits." ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#)) ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#))

**First fruits** (536) (aparche from apó = away from + árchomai = to begin) (see also the discussion **First Fruits, Christ - As OT Prophecy of His Resurrection**) is first of all an OT technical term used to describe the first portion of a grain harvest or fruit harvest or the first portion of an animal offering, as from one's herd. The first fruits as will be discussed more below represented the first portion of an offering (grain or animal) or the firstborn male (Ex 13:12, 13, 14, 15, Nu 18:15, 16), all of which were to be set aside (considered holy) and considered as belonging specifically to the Lord. The first portion of the harvest was regarded both as a first installment and as a pledge of the final delivery of the whole and were offered to God in thanksgiving for His goodness in providing them.

In the present passage James uses **aparche** or **first fruits** much like **Paul** does in **Ro 16:5** (note) to describe new converts, those who have been born again, regenerated by the Spirit, born from above by the Father of lights.

**G M Burge** explains that "The Greek term **aparche** had a wide currency stretching from the fifth century b.c. through the patristic period. It referred to the first produce or profits that might be given as a gift of thanksgiving. The recipient might be a person or, as in most cases, the Temple. Its use evolved so that any offering—even Temple taxes on the people—could be called **aparche**. (See [Dictionary of Paul and his letters - Page lxiv](#) or borrow [Dictionary of Paul and his letters](#))

**First fruits** (see [dictionary discussions](#)) is related to the Jewish term that refers to that which is set apart to God before remainder could be used. Under the Mosaic Law Israel was to bring the **first fruits** of the grain to the LORD and in this act they were acknowledging that all produce was God's. The **first fruits** of a harvest of grain was an indication of a greater harvest to come.

## FIRST-FRUITS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Below is a summarization of the OT teaching regarding **first fruits**...

The first-fruits of the ground were offered unto God just as the first-born of man and animals.

The law required,

(1.) That on the morrow after the Passover Sabbath a sheaf of new corn should be waved by the priest before the altar (Lev 23:5, 6, 10, 12; 2:12)

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 'And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. (Lev 23:9-11)

(2.) That at the feast of Pentecost two loaves of leavened bread, made from the new flour, were to be waved in like manner (Lev 23:15, 17; Nu 28:26).

(3.) The feast of Tabernacles was an acknowledgement that the fruits of the harvest were from the Lord (Ex 23:16; 34:22).

(4.) Every individual, besides, was required to consecrate to God a portion of the first-fruits of the land (Ex 22:29; 23:19; 34:26; Nu 15:20, 21).

You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. You are not to boil a kid in the milk of its mother. (Ex 23:19)

(5.) The law enjoined that no fruit was to be gathered from newly-planted fruit-trees for the first three years, and that the first-fruits of the fourth year were to be consecrated to the Lord (Lev 19:23, 24, 25). Jeremiah (Jer 2:3) alludes to the ordinance of "first-fruits," and hence he must have been acquainted with the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, where the laws regarding it are recorded. (Easton's Bible Dictionary).

Most of the NT uses of **aparche** are by **Paul** who utilizes the metaphor of **first fruits** in three ways in the NT:

**(1) Of those who participate in the First Resurrection** (See notes on The Two Resurrections - "First" and "Second" - on a timeline) The use of **aparche** in this context speaks of the relationship between the resurrection of Christ and the subsequent resurrection of those who are in Christ by grace through faith (1Cor 15:20, 23). Christ's resurrection is the "**first fruit** of those who have fallen asleep" ([1Cor 15:20](#)), and like the **first fruits** of the harvest, it is a taste and a guarantee of the full harvest of resurrection yet to come. (see also the discussion [First Fruits, Christ - As OT Prophecy of His Resurrection](#))

**(2) Of the Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit is called **first fruit** in (Ro 8:23-note) (cf. Holy Spirit as a "downpayment" in 2Co 1:22; 5:5; [see Eph 1:14](#)-note), a foretaste of our supernatural life in the age to come.

**(3) Of Converts**. When Paul speaks of his first converts in a region, he calls them the "**first fruits**" (cf "first fruits of Achaia" in 1Co 16:15). Epaenetus ("praised") was the first convert (and predictive of a greater harvest to follow) from Asia who became part of Paul's "offering of the Gentiles" to the Lord (see Ro 15:16-note).

## FIRST-FRUITS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are 8 uses of **aparche** in NAS...

**Romans 8:23** (note) And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the **first fruits** of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

**Comment:** While indeed Christ has redeemed us by His precious blood, our redemption is not yet fully consummated. The **first fruits** of the Spirit are analogous to the pledge of the Spirit and signify that there is more to come. Just as the first handful of ripened grain is a pledge of the entire harvest to follow, so the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that the full inheritance will be ours. The "**redemption of our body**" represents the final divine "installment" in our redemption at which time believers will be changed in a moment and receive their glorified bodies.

**The Nelson study Bible:** The **firstfruits** of a harvest was a foretaste of the harvest to come. So the Spirit, or His work, is God's assurance of the greater blessings to come.

**Spirit Filled Life Study Bible** - Just as the **firstfruits** of a harvest are a pledge of the full crop to come, the Holy Spirit is the pledge of our full adoption as God's children, when our bodies are redeemed. The metaphor also suggests that the Holy Spirit is the foretaste of the life to come (see Eph. 1:14). We groan because although our souls are saved, our bodies are still subject to pain and sin. However, we look forward with hope (Ro 8:24) to our **resurrection bodies**, which will be free from physical frailty and indwelling sin (see 1Co 15:50-54) (**Ed:** Free from presence of sin and even the pleasure of sin. Hallelujah! Maranatha!).

**W E Vine** - The Holy Spirit, indwelling the believer, is the **firstfruits** of the full harvest of the Cross. In His whole person He is given to each believer at the new birth. The phrase "**the firstfruits of the Spirit**" does not mean that believers possess a part of the Holy Spirit now and will possess Him entirely hereafter. He Himself is the earnest of the liberty of the glory hereafter to be enjoyed both by the children of God and by creation. So Christ is spoken of in His resurrection in relation to all who have fallen asleep in Him (1Co 15:20, 23). So, again, believers now are spoken of in relationship to the whole of the redeemed in Jas 1:18-[note](#)...

## **ALREADY... NOT YET**

**Net Bible Notes** - In the "**already - not yet**" scheme of the NT the possession of the Spirit now by believers ("**already**") can be viewed as a guarantee that God will give them the balance of the promised blessings in the future ("**not yet**").

**G C Berkouwer** - The unfulfilled condition—the "**not yet**"—can also be approached on the basis of what is written about the gift of the Spirit. The believers received the Spirit as "**firstfruits**" (Ro 8:23). This gift is at once a possession, a rich, blessed, and unquestionable reality, and an initial endowment. As an initial gift, it stands in direct line with the expectation. Furthermore, the Spirit is called the "guarantee" (2Co 1:22; 5:5—arrabon), a word that clearly conveys the eschatological nature of both "already" and "not yet." There is no cause for skepticism about the reality of this gift. The very awareness of its reality is "the guarantee of ... full future possession of salvation." The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance (Ep 1:14-note). God has prepared us for the transition from the mortal to the immortal through His gift of the Spirit as pledge. Thus, "already" and "not yet" are not contrasted in an irreconcilable antithesis. Through what has been given, the believer obtains a perspective on a new fulness, namely, the reality of the inheritance. The designation "first fruits" indicates the beginning-character of the gift of the Spirit; the designation "pledge" indicates the veracity of the promise and validity of the expectation. Both designations firmly establish the correlation between present and future. (**Studies in Dogmatics: The Return of Christ**)

**Romans 11:16** (note) And if the **first piece** (first fruit = Abraham who was holy or set apart by God) of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches (Gentile converts, the see of Abraham) are too. (**Comment:** Paul used the metaphor of **first fruits** to explain how Gentile salvation had Jewish roots in Abraham.)

**Romans 16:5** (note) also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first **convert** to Christ from Asia.

**1 Corinthians 15:20** But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the **first fruits** of those who are asleep.

**1 Corinthians 15:23** But each in his own order: Christ the **first fruits**, after that those who are Christ's at His coming (**Comment:** Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all believers. Christ is the firstfruits, the One Who starts it off, the One making a beginning, and thus the One giving promise that those who belong to Christ will also be raised at His future return.)

**1 Corinthians 16:15** Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the **first fruits** of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen

you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

**James 1:18** In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the **first fruits** among His creatures.

[Revelation 14:4 \(note\)](#) These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as **first fruits** to God and to the Lamb.

Here are the 57 uses of **aparche** in the Septuagint (LXX)

Ex 22:29; 23:19; 25:2, 3; 35:5; 36:6; 38:24; Lev 2:12; 22:12; 23:10; Nu 5:9; 15:20, 21; 18:8, 11, 12, 29, 30, 32; 31:29; Deut. 12:6, 11, 17; 18:4; 26:2, 10; 33:21; 1Sa 2:29; 10:4; 2Sa 1:21; 2Chr. 31:5, 10, 12, 14; Ezra 8:25; Neh. 10:37, 39; 12:44; 13:5; Ps 78:51; 105:36; Ezek. 20:31, 40; 44:30; 45:1, 6f, 13, 16; 48:8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 20, 21; Mal. 3:8

**First fruits of His creatures** - This is a most precious description of believers as God's creatures, who are being singled out and separated from the rest of humanity. O, how I fear I take this truth too often, too much for granted. Forgive me Father.

**Hiebert** writes that...

When James speaks of "we" as the first fruits, it seems natural that he is applying the term specifically to his Jewish Christian readers. They were the first sheaves of the gospel harvest and the earnest of what would yet be reaped. As the first ripe samples of that harvest, they proclaimed the new order of spiritual things that God was bringing upon the world scene. ([Hiebert's Excellent Commentaries](#)) ([James -- D. Edmond Hiebert](#))

**Jamieson** has an interesting thought commenting that...

Of all God's visible creatures, believers are the noblest part, and like the legal **first-fruits**, sanctify the rest; for this reason they are much tried now.

**Creatures** (2938) ([ktisma](#) from [ktízo](#) = to create, form or found) describes that which is created. A created thing. A creature. **BDAG** - product of creative action, that which is created (by God), creature (created by God)."

**Gilbrant** - This is the common word used to denote that which is created, "the creature." It is an abstract word referring to anything God has created. One example of its use in the New Testament is found at 1 Timothy 4:4: "For every creature of God is good." The word is often qualified to limit the grouping of creatures referred to. For example, "every creature which is in heaven" (Revelation 5:13) and "the creatures which were in the sea" (Revelation 8:9). It is the will of God that man be foremost in the creation (James 1:18).

**Ktisma** - 4x in the NT - The **NAS** renders **ktisma** as created(2), created thing(1), creatures(2).

Jas. 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

1 Tim. 4:4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;

Rev 5:13+ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

Rev 8:9+ and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. .

It is slightly different than ktisis, creation. Ktisis stresses the work of the original formation of an object and represents something which has undergone a process of creation. Ktisma stresses the result of this work and represents something which is the product of creation.

**TDNT** has an interesting comment regarding this word group ([ktizo](#), [ktisis](#), [ktisma](#), [ktistes](#)): The question of the "whence" of the world and of man within it leads remorselessly to the limit of our thinking where it comes up against what is "above" it and what it necessarily finds to be the frontier imposed upon it from without—or where it threatens to lose itself as it plunges further and further into the void. The question is, then, whether it is in fact led to that limit which it can and must honour as the frontier imposed upon it. The answer to the decisive questions of life is enclosed in the answer to this question of the origin of the world. The "whither" is indissolubly bound up with the "whence." So, too, is the "what," i.e., the meaning of the world and of man. It is not for nothing that creation plays a leading part in the modern philosophical debate.

**Steven Cole** applies this section of James to how we handle **trials** and relates our handling of them to our knowledge of God's attributes writing that...

**To avoid deception** (Jas 1:16) **in trials, affirm God's sovereign goodness, especially as seen in your salvation** (Jas 1:18).

When you go through trials, Satan hits you on these two attributes of God: Either He is not **good**, or He must not be **sovereign**.

To stand firm, by faith you must cling to both His goodness and His absolute sovereignty. James affirms God's sovereignty in salvation as the bedrock truth to get you through your trials. If God is the source of your salvation, then He isn't going to abandon you later when you face trials. As Paul put it (Phil. 1:6), "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." (Paul argues the same in Ro 8:28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36-note) James makes two points in Jas 1:18:

A. Since salvation is totally from God's will and power, He will care for you through every trial.

"In the exercise of His will, He brought us forth by the word of truth..." (Jas 1:18a).

Many believers would rewrite that verse to read, "In the exercise of our free will, He brought us forth..." They make our will the decisive factor in salvation. They say, "God has done everything that He can do for your salvation. The deciding vote is up to you. When you pull the lever of faith, all the goodies of salvation pour out the chute!" But the emphasis throughout the Bible is not on human will in salvation, but rather on God's will in our salvation. When God went to Adam and Eve after they sinned, He didn't present them with the package and ask, "What do you think? Would you like for Me to clothe you with animal skins and to send a Savior by the seed of the woman, or not? You decide!" When God called Abram, He didn't present His plan and then ask Abram for his decision. God called Abram and told him what He (God) would do and what Abram should do in response.

When the Lord knocked Saul (Paul) to the ground and blinded him, He didn't say, "Would you like to decide for Jesus now?" He said, "Get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do" (Acts 9:6). God told Ananias, who was to go to Paul, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15, 16).

The Lord Jesus emphasized the same truth, that God's will is the decisive factor in our salvation. He said (Mt 11:27), "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Sinners are spiritually blinded by Satan, "so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2Co 4:4-note). It requires the sovereign will of God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, "to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2Co 4:6-note).

Those who argue against God's sovereignty in salvation say that God's command that we believe the gospel implies our ability to keep the command. Otherwise, He would be mocking us to tell us to believe when we can't believe. But immediately after Jesus said that no one could know the Father, except those to whom the Son wills to reveal Him, He said, "Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). Would anyone dare to say that Jesus was mocking them? With the command to believe, God imparts His life-giving, eye-opening power to all whom He has chosen. Jesus commanded a dead man named Lazarus to come forth from his tomb. Was He mocking him? No, because with the command, Jesus sent His life giving power, so that Lazarus could hear the command and obey it. He didn't sit in the tomb debating, "Should I decide for Jesus or not?" Jesus commanded the man with the withered hand in the synagogue to stretch forth his hand (Lk 6:10). Was He mocking this man, to ask him in front of everyone to do what he was not able to do? No, because with the command, Jesus imparted His healing power to enable the man to obey. So, yes, God calls on sinners to repent and believe the gospel.

You cannot be saved unless you repent and believe. But when you repent and believe, it is not at all due to your free will or ability. You were dead in your sins and loving it (Eph 2:1, 2, 3-note; Jn 3:19, 20). The only reason you responded in faith is that in the exercise of God's will, He brought you from death to life (Jas 1:15, 18) by the power of His word of truth, the gospel. You weren't the deciding factor in your salvation. God was! You were saved because "in the exercise of His will, [God] brought [you] forth by the word of truth." Because of that, you can trust Him to take care of you in times of severe trials.

## **B. Since God saves you for His purpose, He will care for you through every trial.**

James 1:18b continues, "so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." This goes back to the Old Testament requirement that Israel bring the first portion of their crop as a thank-offering to God. God also claimed the ownership of all firstborn males, who had to be redeemed (Ex 22:29; 23:16, 19). This has two practical implications for us, who are God's first fruits:

(1) As God's first fruits, He owns you and He is free to use you as He chooses. Since He saved you by bringing you from death to life in the exercise of His will, you are not your own. You have been bought with the blood of Christ. Therefore, you must present yourself and everything that you have to God as a thank-offering, to use as He chooses. Have you done that? Do you live that way?

(2) As God's first fruits, you are to bear fruit for Him. Offering the first fruits to God meant that there would be more to follow. Verse 18 reminds me of Jesus' words to His disciples (John 15:16), "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you." God saved you so that you would bear fruit by bringing others to know Him. If you're living for yourself, spending all of your time, money, and efforts to make life more comfortable for yourself, then you're serving yourself, not the Lord. James wants you to realize that if God has imparted new life to you, then you are His first fruits. Especially in trials, your aim should be to bear fruit for Him and to bring glory to His name.

Conclusion - Joseph is one of the best illustrations of someone in severe trials affirming both God's goodness and His sovereignty. His brothers were planning to murder him, but decided to sell him into slavery instead, so that they could make a profit by getting rid of him. As a slave in Egypt, he obeyed God by resisting the tempting advances of Potiphar's wife. It would have been easy to rationalize yielding to her seduction. He was lonely, single, and in a foreign country. What prospects did he ever have for marriage? So how did God "reward" him for his obedience? He got thrown into an Egyptian dungeon, where he stayed for several years. He could have become a very bitter man. Instead, years later when he was second to Pharaoh and could have taken revenge on his brothers, he said to them (Ge 50:20), "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." In his many trials, Joseph avoided spiritual deception by affirming God's sovereignty and His goodness. In whatever trials you go through, you can resist that spiritual con artist, Satan, by holding firmly to God's goodness and His sovereignty, especially as seen in your salvation. ([James 1:16-18 Avoiding Deception in Trials](#))