

Give Credit Where Credit Is Due – James 1:16-18

James 1:16-18 – while you’re turning there . . .

Ever been in situation where you’ve done something really good or particularly well,
and somebody else gets the credit for it?

Mistakenly, somebody assigns that good deed or job well done to someone else?

And the person on the receiving end is like – cool

They take credit for it, knowing full well they had nothing to do with it?

Don’t you hate that! I hate that

Not only is it unjust, but it tests humility in ways that make my teeth grind

“Congratulations . . . you big jerk” (teeth clenched)

That’s the issue James addresses here

On the one hand, he doesn’t want us blaming God for bad things, like temptation and sin (v12-15)

On the other, he doesn’t want us taking credit for good things – for blessings (v16-18)

He wants us to give credit where credit is due – that’s the point of these verses (read)

He transitions in v16 between his previous thoughts re temptation/sin, and his subsequent thoughts re blessings/gifts by saying – *Do not be deceived my beloved brothers.*

Don’t be fooled – bad things don’t come fr God anymore than good ones come fr you

In fact, when it comes to good things, he deserves all the credit because it’s all fr him

It’s God who blesses (v16-17)

Every good and perfect gift is from above

Every bonus, talent, business success, beautiful feature, bit of life, breath of health –
All of it comes from God

Yes, people may do nice things every now and then

But even then it’s God who created them, shaped their heart, and put them in your life

So give credit where credit is *due* – don’t take it for yourself; don’t give it to another

The glory is God’s because he’s the one who blesses

John the Baptist made this very clear when he said (**Jn 3:27**) – *A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven*

And Paul adds in **1 Cor 4:7** – *What do you have that you did not receive [nothing]? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

Don’t be taking credit for something God is ultimately responsible for

It’s God who blesses, so give credit where credit is due

- Notice this phrase, *Father of lights* – ancient Jewish title that refers to the God who created the heavenly bodies that give off light
Used here, he’s saying that the one who blesses *us*, is *same* one who created the world
Since it all comes from him, he deserves the credit
And one of the best ways to give it is to *count* your many blessings . . .
To think of them, reflect on them, to list them – and then *tell* him

Think about it from a parental perspective

Would you not be honored, if your teenager came downstairs to the dinner table and recounted to you *all* the things you’ve done for them?

How much they appreciate you

How, apart from you, they’d be destitute and out on the street

And that they don’t deserve a single thing you’ve supplied?

After you picked yourself up off the floor, you’d be quite honored, would you not?

And what would you want to do right then and there, as much as you possibly could?

As much as would be beneficial for them?

Bless them more! Hello

If you’re going to lavish me with praise, I’m going to lavish you with blessing

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Mt 7:11)

Count our blessings and give credit where credit is due

Count your blessings like the old hymn says, and name them one by one

Count your many blessings, see what God has done

- By virtue of the fact that you’re sitting here this morning, you have many
I want to give you a minute to think about them, reflect them, even write a few down
When you’re done, I want you to hear from some people who’ve already done that
But first, I want to help you w/ some **categories** to spur thoughts – things like . . .
Family, Health, Friends, Home, Finances, Church, Work . . . (couples)

Ps 105:1-2 – *Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples . . . tell of all his wondrous works!*

Not only is it good to thank God privately for your blessings, but to tell others as well
Not for the purpose of bragging, but to glorify the giver of the gift; Rejoice w/ receiver

Each of these couples has experienced God’s blessing recently, in different ways

So I’ve asked them to share it with us, and start with the circumstances that led to it

Jim & Deb Demarest – SG/church family; **Jerry & Barb Moore** – tithing

Bob & Cheryl Lorenzen – salvation/church; **Chad & Kristin Reickard** – adoption

Photo of Reickard’s baby, Jaevan Jee (wait until they mention his name)

We rejoice with you guys, and praise God for the blessings he’s given

Give credit where credit is due – because it’s God who blesses, and . . .

It’s God who will always bless (v17)

Read v17 – God’s blessings will never end, because God never changes

Mal 3:6 – *I the LORD do not change*

Heb 13:8 – *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Ps 102:27 – *You are the same, and your years have no end.*

God never changes

And because he never changes, what he has done since the creation of the world is
what he will continue to do for all eternity

Which in this case – is bless his people

Notice the play on words here in v17

Our blessings come *from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change*

This is simply James' way of getting our attention with a play on words, in order to draw attention to the fact that God does not change
There's not even a slight *variation* from time to time

AW Tozer, pastor/prolific writer; died 1963; said it this way (*Knowledge of the Holy*, 50)
"All that God is he has always been, and all that he has been and is, he will ever be."
Which means he will *always*, *always* bless us

- Theologians call this the **immutability** of God – that attribute that describes his never-changing nature
In fact, not only is he unchanging in his attributes and being, he's *unchange-able*
He cannot change – if he could, he wouldn't be God

To get your mind around this, imagine for a moment the implications if God *could* change
If he could change for the better, then what he is right now isn't perfect, and therefore he's not God, and our trust in him is mis-guided
If he could change for the worse, then what he is now is unstable, can't be fully trusted

If he's God, he not only won't change, but he can't change (10/11)
The Bible says it; His nature demands it; Our faith depends on it
That's why this truth from James is so critical for *all* of life, including our blessings

- Now, if you've read your Bible carefully, this may bring up a question
How do we reconcile his immutability, the fact that he does not change, with the few examples in the Bible where it seems he changed his mind?
Especially when you consider **Nu 23:19** – *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

But what about the time he told Jonah he would overthrow the people of Nineveh
But when they repented of their sin, he withheld their punishment (Jonah 3)
Or when he said he would consume the Israelites due to their idolatry in Ex 32
But relented as a result of Moses' prayers
Or when God said he would take Hezekiah's life in Is 38, but added 15 years when he cried out to the Lord
How do we reconcile the immutability of God with these situations?

In each of these examples – he responded with judgment because at that moment that's what his unchanging nature called for, due to the hardness of their hearts
But when their hearts turned in repentance – his unchanging nature called for mercy
Both attributes are consistent with his nature
He simply applies them, with perfect wisdom, according to the situation at hand
All things staying the same – God never changes his mind
But if the situation changes, or our *hearts* change, he very well may change his response

And aren't you glad
If God wasn't free to respond differently to different situations as they changed, we'd be doomed – there'd be no place for mercy due to our repentance
There'd be no room for a change of heart

In each of these examples, as with your life and mine, he responds in a way that is consistent with his unchanging character, *and* appropriate for the moment
That's a blessing in and of itself
Something for which to give credit where credit is due

It's God who blesses; It's God who will always bless; and . . .

It's God who blessed you in the first place (v18)

Read v18 – James is like, don't be deceived brothers, bad things don't come from God, and good things do . . . including and starting with, your salvation
It's apparent that he's talking about salvation here by his use of phrases like *brought us forth*, and *word of truth*, and especially *firstfruits* which is a common way to refer to Christians in the NT

It's God who blessed you in the first place . . .

- **With salvation**

He brought us forth – he delivered us, he called us out . . .
From the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
In whom we have purity, restoration, and renewal because our sins are forgiven and we've been washed white as snow
That's how Paul describes salvation in Col 1:13-14
That's a blessing for which God deserves the credit – he brought you forth, he saved you

- **By a sovereign act of his will**

Of his own will he brought us forth
God didn't consult anybody else when he chose you for adoption before the foundation of the world – like Eph 1
It wasn't a decision by committee when he wrote your name in the book of life – like John says in Rev 13:8
He didn't even consult you

Yes, you made a free-will decision to trust him, but (a little mind-bender here) he predestined you to do so before you ever existed

Eph 1:5 – *In love he predestined us for adoption* [he determined that we would be one of his own] *through Jesus Christ* [through the work of Christ on our behalf and our faith in him], *according to the purpose of his will*

God is sovereign in choosing you for salvation – about that the Bible is explicit
Man is free and responsible to respond – that the Bible clearly implies
How they work together, it doesn't say; It just says it's so

Here, James emphasizes God's sovereignty in order to ensure that credit is given where credit is due for the biggest blessing of all – your salvation
He brought you forth and *he* saved you by a sovereign act of his will
Which means *he* should get all the credit

And he did so . . .

- **Using the Good News of Jesus Christ**

That's the *word of truth* to which James refers – the gospel; the good news

Which means that God didn't just snap his fingers and turn you from a sinner to a saint
Rather, at some point in your life, he most likely used men and women of God to
expose you to the truth, and grip your heart
Or he exposed you directly to the *written* Word

In either case, he convinced you of its truth – and you believed
Convicted you of your sin – and you repented
Compelled you to commit – and you were saved
What a blessing – give credit where credit is due

He did all that . . .

- **As an example of what's to come**

Read v18 – They were *a kind of firstfruits of his creatures/creation*

These early believers were meant to be an example to those who followed in their footsteps
They were assurance (that's the idea of firstfruits) that what God did *then*, in blessing
them with salvation – he would continue to do *later*, in blessing *others*
Having brought *them* forth, God would do the same in us
They were an example/guarantee of what was to come

Likewise, we too are examples of what's to come
Examples to those who will follow in our footsteps of faith
That they will be blessed with salvation by a sovereign act of God, just like we are
We are blessed as an example of what's to come
The only thing that remains is to **give credit where credit is due**

Pray; Sing that hymn – Count Your Many Blessings