

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. - James 1:16-18

This almost poetic passage comes as a breath of fresh air on the heels of a dissertation dissecting the means by which one might fall away, possibly blame it on God, and find himself in sin by his own choices.

The writer tells how he really feels. He explains the regard he has for his listeners as "brothers", a term of endearment and of co-origin. He and his listeners were related. It would be well for us to have the same regard one for another as well. Would it not be sweet to expend effort in finding the similarities rather than the differences. And, having identified all the common ground, then treat the differences within the context of the commonality as one brother caring for another.

The NIV makes no distinction between the good gift and the perfect gift. The KJV does make a distinction and it may be interesting to notice the similarity and the difference. The good gift is the gift of benefit, a help if you would. It might be akin to the helping hand one might bestow upon a fellow motorist who has a flat tire and needs help to change to his spare. The perfect gift speaks to that which comes as an unexpected specific windfall that satisfies entirely the recipient's needs, possibly in a greater way than he could imagine. It might be akin to the aforementioned example where the helpful motorist directs his chauffeur to pull his limo over, pick up the stricken motorist and, while delivering the hapless motorist to his destination, phones to his mechanic to fix the tire and tow the repaired vehicle to the motorists destination for his continued use.

The source of the benevolence is the unchanging Father, the creator of the heavenly lights. Herein is the poetry. The writer not only describes God as unchanging but adds the superlative in graphic terms by relating his unchanging nature to the static but predictable (not capricious) movement of the heavens. The ancients were entirely aware of the heavens, possibly from being a largely nomadic society with great amounts of time to lay back and study the skies. Both land and sea travelers depended on the movement of the skies to determine not only their position on earth, but their position in time.

He, this unswerving and determined God, from the beginning of eternity (as with the "Logos") intended for us to be His, both as His specific and beloved creation and as the redeemed portion of humanity (sheep not goats), the first fruits. The first fruits were those crops, birds, cattle, sheep, wine, meal, *etc.* that at the time of planting were designated to be given to the priests as sacrifices and were given preferential treatment (gifting) in order to be the very best of the best of the crop/herd. In the farmers mind, they never did belong to the farmer/sacrificer. Hence, from God's standpoint we have always been His from the day of our creation, actually from the inception of the Logos.

If God can find His Church to be such a savory bunch, how dare we ajudge one another to be any less. As brothers in this elevated procreation we should have only the highest regard for one another and be sure that the sacrificial crop remains perfect for God's enjoyment.

- Jim McKay