

“Off to a Good Start”  
James 1:17-20

James reminds his readers in verse seventeen that the One who will see them through their trials and difficulties is the Father of Lights (a Jewish euphemism for the sun, moon and stars; Gen 1:3, 16). The perfect *gift* is the Son (John 3:16, 4:10; Rom. 5:15; Eph. 4:7) and the *gift* of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 10:45). He has brought us forth (John 3:3, born from above) by His own will (Eph 1:5). The written word of God brings us to *the* living Word (John 1:1, 14) who is *the* Truth (John 14:6). God does not change because we go through trials and tribulations (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). The sun is always shining but we may be in physical darkness because the earth has rotated and we are in its’ shadow in relation to the sunshine. Our lives must be built on the unchangeable solid Rock (Matt. 7:24-27; 1Cor. 10:4).

The “good start” that begins in the good God with the heavenly birth is according to His will (John 1:13; Eph. 1:5, 9). He is Light and there is no darkness (evil) in Him (1John 1:5). He desires *all* men to be saved (1Tim. 2:4) and is *not* willing that any perish but that *all* should come to repentance (2Pet. 3:9). It is our responsibility to be receptive to His activity of grace in our lives (John 1:12). That begins with a view of the character and nature of God as He is revealed in Scripture. We are to be first fruits (Ex. 23:19), offering our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2). We are to sanctify (set apart) our entire body, soul and spirit (1Thess. 5:23), realizing we are not our own (1Cor. 6:19-20) because we have been bought by Christ.

James gives us practical instructions on how this is accomplished in verse nineteen. Primarily, we are to listen (hear) to His word, the truth by which we have been begotten and brought into relationship with Him (Rom. 1:16). We are to formulate our understanding of God not from our own fancies or the opinions of others but from God through His word (Ps. 119:11; Matt. 4:4; 2Tim. 2:15, 3:16). There is also a general sense that we should be more ready to hear than speak; disposed to learn always (Eccl. 5:2; Prov. 10:19, 13:1, 3, 15:2). This also entails a control of our passions. The Greek word translated wrath is *orge*, from which the English word orgy is derived. It means excitement, anger, indignation, punishment (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:8; 1Thess. 5:9; Rev. 6:16). It is *not* conducive to righteousness (Job 5:2; Ps. 46:10; Prov. 15:1, 18, 16:32; 1Pet. 3:8-12).

