

Daily Bible Study

“The Patriarch of The New Birth”

James 1:18

March 19– March 25, 2023

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –As we continue our study of James, we take as our text, **James 1:18**: “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*” A single verse of Scripture is all we will study this week as it is absolutely loaded with important principles we need to understand concerning the nature of our salvation. Remember that James is giving us a letter of practical instruction concerning the nature of living as a Christian. He is telling us throughout his Epistle that a genuine salvation will be accompanied by good works. The reason real, genuine Christians do good works is simply because they are children of the only truly righteous One, God Himself. He is their Father, ***The Patriarch of The New Birth*** if you will. The new birth given to us believers is a godly, holy, Christlike life and James will tell us a bit about it in this verse. In **verse 17** we saw James speaking of God being the giver of every good and perfect gift. He is *The Father of lights* who unlike the created lights of sun, moon, and stars is constant and unchanging, without shadows. And in **verses 13-16** he warns us and teaches concerning trials and who is responsible for temptation to sin and He insists that, God’s gifts, far from being a cause for temptation to sin are instead invariably good. In all the changes of a changing world, His gifts are constant. He is constantly good in His nature and here in our text we find He gives the greatest of His gifts; namely, salvation or the new birth as it is called to his own children.

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Help me learn about You, **The Patriarch of The New Birth** and the new life You have graciously given me.*

TUESDAY – **James 1:18**: “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*” James is about to discuss the new birth and he starts by saying this birth is a supernatural birth which is the Father’s will. The words *Of his own will* are given great emphasis in the original Greek. They could more literally be translated “having made his decision”. Other translations help us get the point, The NLT translates, “*He chose*”, the NRSV states, “*In fulfillment of His own purpose...*”, the NASB, “*In the exercise of His will*”, while J.B. Phillips paraphrases, “*By his own wish he made us his own sons...*” The clear point is that The Father is acting decisively with a determined, plan. The Greek word which is translated *Of His own will* is the word *boulomai* which means “to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded, of willing as an affection, to desire”. It speaks of a rational, conscious desire. Gerhard Kittel his work, *The Theological Dictionary of The New Testament* says the word “denotes the resolute will of God as the motive force which gives new life”.

The verb *boulomai* is an aorist passive participle which indicates as does all of Scripture; God always takes the initiative in mankind’s salvation. This particular grammatical voice signifies that the subject is being acted upon; for example, the subject is the receiver of the verbal action. A verb in the passive voice with God as the stated or implied agent is often referred to as the “divine passive.” The new birth of salvation and natural birth are similar in this way; the decision is that of the parent, not of the child. Birth is something that happens to the child as a result of the decisions and actions made by the parents. Scripture is clear concerning the story lying behind our conversion. It is ultimately God’s decision. The Lord Jesus made it plain when He said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (**John 15:16**). But so many Christians can remember with clarity the day we “chose” him. But since we are taught in Sacred Scripture that “no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (**John 6:44**), and that the very faith we exercise when we believe in Jesus is the Father’s gift to us (**Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 1:29**), we learn that behind our choice, making it possible and making it real, is the wonder that he first chose us. It’s an issue of what we call Primary Causality. There is a Primary Cause of all things (God) which comes before and stands over Secondary Causality. This is what James refers to when he says, *Of his own will he brought us forth*. The decision was God’s and as we will soon see, so was the action which implemented the decision. Our conscious experience of becoming a Christian at conversion, and committing our lives to Jesus, or as we often heard said, “receiving him into our hearts” is all the consequence of his decision and action.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, forgive my ignorance and pride for describing my conversion like it was something I did in my own power. Thank You that as James records, You brought me forth by Your own will and decision.”

WEDNESDAY – **James 1:18**: “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*” At the very heart of **verse 18** lay the words, *He brought us forth*. As we saw yesterday, it was the very purpose and decision of The Lord Himself to *bring us forth*, to birth us spiritually if you will. James was not speaking of a natural birth, with human parents, but of a supernatural birth, with a Divine Parent, The Patriarch, The Father. It was the purpose and plan of the Father to bring us spiritual life but today we now look at the power He used to accomplish this new birth. Having made his decision, the Father now implements it. James tells us that the *means* the Father used to *bring us forth* was *the word of truth*. James does not elaborate much here on precisely what he means by this but as we look to other places in Scripture we do in fact find a thorough explanation. What is the “*word of truth*”? It is nothing less than the very Gospel message itself. Paul speaks to the synonymous nature between the word of truth and the gospel in passages like **Ephesians 1:13** and **Colossians 1:5**. He says the word of truth is the gospel of your salvation and Paul explains it in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** this way; “*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved,*

if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” The word of truth that God uses to save a sinner is the message about Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. In **Romans 10:17** Paul says in a summary statement, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Literally “hearing the words about Christ”. Many people today want to call themselves Christians because the talk a lot about “God” or “carma” or religion or church etc... but the message God uses to bring us forth is the message of the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ, *The Way, The Truth, The Life* (**John 14:6**). If you want to tell me you are a Christian I better hear about Christ.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Dear God, I really don’t even know how depraved my heart is. Without You and Your Holy Spirit I would be hopeless. Thank You for patiently loving me as a husband to an unfaithful bride. Help me walk in The Spirit so I wouldn’t fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

THURSDAY – James 1:18: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” Before we move on to the last portion of this verse, lets pause and look at a couple more passages that show us how this word of truth from God has the power to birth us and bring us out of death to spiritual life. The first passage that helps us is **2 Corinthians 4:1–6** where Paul contrasts those who know the gospel and know Jesus Christ as Lord with those whose eyes have been blinded by “the god of this world”. He explains so very clearly in **verse 6:** “For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” He draws a parallel between the word of God as the agent in creation which brought light to God using His word in bringing new life through the gospel. We could put it this way. Just as God said, “Let there be light” in **Genesis 1:3**, so He has also said, “Let there be life”. Secondly, in **1 Peter 1:23**, we read that “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,”. Peter is here saying what James says in our text: the word is the agent in the new birth. But he also takes us a little further in our understanding of James, for he defines the life-giving word as “that word is the good news which was preached to you” (**1 Peter 1:25**). James’ word of truth is what God uses to bring life. This is one of the most glorious truths in the whole Bible. It teaches us that salvation is truly all of God because until that new life is imparted we are “dead in trespasses and sins” (**Ephesians 2:1**), and being dead we are totally unable to do anything on our own or of our own free will. but when God purposes to move upon us He brings us to life, gifts us with faith and we respond to Him in repentance and faith in the message about Jesus. As Martin Luther said, “Woa, you mean the righteousness by which I will be saved, is not mine?” It's what he called a justitia alienum, an alien righteousness; a righteousness that belongs properly to somebody else. It's a righteousness that is extra nos, outside of us the righteousness we receive comes from outside of us not from within us.” If anything is to be

done, The Father must do it; if any blessing or change is to come to us, it must come from outside; if any agency is to be at work, it must be other than ours, for we are dead, and our only activity in death is to continue to stink and to increase in corruption. But there is something else inherent in this great truth and that is the security of our salvation. If salvation was to depend on my choice, it would be as uncertain as my will which fluctuates constantly and reflects my divided, fallen nature. But it is His choice: *of his own will be brought us forth by the word of truth*. And until His will changes, His word alters or his truth is proved false, my salvation cannot be threatened or forfeited.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, thank you that I am saved and secure in my salvation because it was Your choice and Your Word of Truth that has brought me to life. The same power of Your Word demonstrated in creation has called me out of death to life eternal. Praise You.*

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – James 1:18: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” We close this week by looking at the last truth from our text from James. When a baby is born physically we look forward to their growing and life ahead. In the same way, the new birth not only was brought about by the plan and power of The Father, but it also has a forward look to the fulfilment of a purpose our Father has in mind: *that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures*. God brought us to life and saved us for a reason. We are His handiwork, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (**Ephesians 2:10**). James says that we are “a kind of firstfruits.” All through Scripture we find this imagery. In Old Testament times, the first fruits were holy and belonged to God. The first-born of both man and of cattle, the first produce from the vineyard, orchard, and field, all of them were *firstfruits* to God (**Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Numbers 15:20–21, Deuteronomy 18:4**). The Old Testament prophets began to use the expression figuratively. Jeremiah writes, “Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest” (**Jeremiah 2:3**). In the New Testament we also read that Christians are God’s *firstfruits* (**Romans 11:16, 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:15**). James continues this as well. Even in Revelation we find the truth that believers belong to the countless multitude (symbolically represented as the 144,000) who “These were redeemed (purchased) from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.” (**Revelation 14:4**). We are God’s *firstfruits* and as such are holy. That is, God has chosen us from among all his creatures to be holy and dedicated to Himself. We belong to God so as James has stated earlier no one should say that God can tempt us or lead us astray for that is impossible. He has instead, given us every good and perfect gift, namely new birth and salvation by His word and has made us His *firstfruits* to share in His holiness.

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, You truly are The Patriarch. Thank You for bringing me into The Family of God and help me to live a holy life worthy of such a calling.*