

## James 25-04-06b

We're ready to pick up our study in James chapter 1 verse 1. There is a fascinating relationship here and I like to think that it confirms my notions of authorship in this interplay between our identity as slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is a place of service, of identity that is based on who we're related to, rather than works of righteousness that we have done, rather than His mercy that saves us. The identity that has us looking outward for ways to implement and accomplish the Master's purpose, the Master's goal. Blessed is that servant when the Master returns who finds His servants so doing.

And yet, we have this counterbalancing truth of Scripture that we are no longer slaves, but sons. How do those relate? How do I know when to think of myself as a slave and when to think of myself as a son? We have Scripture that clarifies this for us and you will find this particular Scripture significant in light of what we have seen the last week or two in James. Turn to Matthew chapter 20 and you need to see this on the page.

If you've got a Bible or you've got some screen you can pull this up on, it'll be helpful to be able to see it. Jesus has just told the parable of the workers in the vineyard. The workers in the vineyard.

This begins with those who start early in the morning and He agrees with the laborers for denarius for a day's work. He sent them into the vineyard. He started them early in the morning.

As soon as dawn was breaking and they could see to work, He engages them and says, I'll pay you a denarius if you'll work this day for me. When He had agreed, He sent them into the vineyard. He went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace.

He said, you also go into the vineyard. Whatever is right, I will give you. They went.

Again, He went out about the sixth and the ninth hour. So this is 9 a.m. 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. The ninth hour. This was the hour of the evening sacrifice.

The hour when the Lord Jesus said it is finished. 3 p.m. He did likewise about the 11th hour. This would be 5 p.m. Approaching dusk.

He went out, found others standing idle. Why have you been standing here idle all day? They said, no one hired us. He said to them, you also go into the vineyard.

Whatever is right, you will receive. When evening had come, these last only worked an hour or so. The owner of the vineyard said to his steward, call the laborers and give them wages beginning with the last to the first.

He did this on purpose. Why wouldn't He find the guys that started early in the morning and pay them first? It is to make a point. So those who hired at the 11th hour received a denarius.

When the first came, they supposed they would receive more. They likewise received each a denarius. When they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, these last have worked one hour.

You made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day. He answered one of them and said, friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way.

I wish to give this last man the same as you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good? So the last will be first and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.

You get the idea that these who were upset at the generosity of the landowner to those that didn't work as long as they did is a disqualifier and they are not chosen. After he gives this parable, going up to Jerusalem, he took the 12 disciples on the road and said, we're going up to Jerusalem. The son of man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes.

They will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify. And the third day he will rise again. There is going to be subordination.

There is going to be persecution. There is going to be arrest imprisonment. There is going to be injustice perpetrated.

It is actually going to be in violation of the law of Moses. He will be mocked, scourged and crucified. Jesus knows this ahead of time.

The third day he will rise again. There is a future. There is a time after this hardship.

Notice what comes next. Verse 20. Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to him with her sons.

We think this lady's name was Salome. We think she is a relative of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. Her sons are James and John, the James who I think wrote this letter.

She kneels down and asked something from the Lord Jesus. Do you remember in your Isagogics, in your study and your understanding of ancient culture or just your familiarity, how were women thought of in the patriarchal societies of the past? Who does the talking? Who does the negotiating? Who represents policy and expresses the authority and responsibility for a household? This isn't Zebedee who comes and it isn't the older brother John who comes or James, the brother. It is their mother coming.

Right off the bat, why do you think this is? If this is a legitimate request, if this is a simple question, why don't James and John just come and ask it themselves? Why implicate their mother? Why accompany their mother if this is her idea and stand by silently as she asks this favor? This is an appeal to emotion. It is a way to get around what is proper, what is normal,

what the expectation is, proper channels, if you will. This is doing an end around trying to get the Lord Jesus in an area of potential vulnerability.

Right off the bat, I've told you there was a time when a church lost its pastor. At that time, I was finishing seminary and was available. They approached me to see if I would be interested in candidating.

I was not approached by the board of elders. I was not approached by the men of that group. My wife was approached by the ladies in the group and I immediately declined.

That is an unhealthy situation. It is an unhealthy order. It is a misunderstanding.

It is a sign of lack of maturity, lack of basic Bible understanding, which centers on authority, on chain of command. The head of the woman is the man, the head of the man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God. It is fundamental.

A group that does not understand that needs milk and not solid food. They need to go back to the basics. We are to be authority oriented, fear God, honor the King, respect those that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.

Submit as is appropriate, one to another. Wives, submit to your husbands. Children, obey your parents.

To color outside those lines is to invite disaster and the retraction of the blessing of God. But that is what happens here. The mother of Zebedee's sons came to him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from him.

He said to her, what do you wish? She said to him, grant that these two sons of mine, who is she relating James and John to? These faithful servants, these longstanding, enduring disciples, these who have been with you from the beginning, these who joined you from the Jordan on, these sons of mine, grant this request because of me. They are my sons. Grant that these two sons of mine may sit one on your right hand and the other on your left in your kingdom.

Jesus answered and said, you do not know what you ask. So then he turns to James and John and says, are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said to him, we are able. So he said to them, you will indeed drink my cup.

You will indeed be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give. It is for those for whom it is prepared by my father.

Notice there is a cup of suffering, of hardship. Jesus has just detailed it up above, going to Jerusalem, going to be mocked, scourged, crucified. That's the cup.

Jesus says, you will drink my cup. You are going to be arrested and mistreated, mocked and executed and baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. Notice the cup is yet future at this

point, but the baptism is present.

The baptism I am baptized with. Jesus says in another place, what a significant baptism this is and how anxious I am for it to be accomplished. He was already functioning under the baptism.

So when the 10 heard this request made by Mrs. Zebedee on behalf of her sons, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. Do you remember the parable of the vineyard servants starting at the early morning, others that only worked the last hour and the displeasure of those who felt they were entitled to something that had not been promised? That sense of entitlement, that my justice should prevail instead of the will and generosity of the landowner? Right after that story, John has carefully composed this gospel and he's one of the ones standing there as a part of this scene. The 10 heard it, were greatly displeased.

Jesus called them to himself and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. The disciples, the 10 and probably James and John and certainly Mrs. Zebedee are looking at the right hand and left hand seats as places of authority, places of rule. Of influence.

Rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. Those who are great exercise authority over them, yet it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your do laws.

Let him be your bond slave. If you would be great, be a servant. Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.

Do laws. Let him be your slave. Just as the son of man did not come to be served, did not come as a master, did not come as a heavenly son of God entity.

He emptied himself and took on the form of a servant, a slave. He did not come to be served, but to serve. The Lord Jesus came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Notice it's many and not all. There's no such thing as universal salvation. The son of man did not come to be served.

You go back and think about Philippians chapter two, taking on the form of a servant, coming in the likeness of men, humbling himself, was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. What happens after? For this reason, God has highly exalted him afterward, after drinking the cup, after the baptism, after enduring the shameful death of the cross. Now God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow.

Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the father. First comes the cross. Then comes the crown.

First comes service and servanthood, bond slavery, living entirely for the interest of the master.

Then comes promotion. Then comes opportunity.

Being faithful in a few things, Jesus said, I will make you ruler over many things. The talents were given to servants. Those who were faithful rule over many things.

So how do we view ourselves when there is this seemingly contradictory identity as slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus and sons of God and according to promise? Turn to Romans chapter 8. We saw this in the first session. You are not controlled by the flesh but by the spirit if the spirit of God lives in you. If the spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies.

There is a present subordination, a present submission, a present indentured servitude, if you will, that will be rewarded in the future with eternal life. So verse 12 of Romans 8, Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. If you do that, you will die.

If by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. All who are led by the spirit of God are what? Sons of God. You did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear.

We have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. We don't have a spirit of bond slavery that returns us to fear. We receive the spirit of sonship by whom we require Abba, Father.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children, and if we are children, then we are heirs. We are inheritors, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ if we see the order. We suffer with Him now.

Momentary light affliction working for us in eternal weight of glory. He says down below, I consider our present sufferings, verse 18, are not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us. Present sufferings, present service as bond slaves, enduring, drinking the cup, undergoing the baptism, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who for the joy that was set before Him, the hope of resurrection, the hope of salvation, the hope of eternal life with God in His presence, in His plans and purposes in the future.

Sufferings that are present, not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us. All creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. We serve now.

We will be revealed as sons and heirs, children and heirs later. So, what does this do for us as we tackle our day, as we go through our schedule? We wake up in the morning. There's places to be and stuff to do.

We do all to the glory of God. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. Sometimes doing the right thing means displeasing people in our periphery.

It will be misunderstood. Our motives will be misconstrued and usually in a negative fashion.

There will be accusations.

There will be machinations. There will be gossip and maligning and judging. Do we alter our path or do we do what we do knowing that God sees the heart? And we are endeavoring to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the light of the Word of God.

If that means people are unhappy with us, so be it. The Son of God went to Jerusalem and was mocked and scourged and crucified by people who massively, galactically misread and misunderstood who He was and why He came. Jesus didn't try to straighten them out.

He didn't try to give them a Bible class. He didn't try to talk them out of it. He didn't give excuses for His birth or His lack of Pharisaical education or the unsophistication of His disciples or the simplicity and the directness of His message steeped in Old Testament Scripture that refuted and confounded the doctors of the law, the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, and the elders of the people.

He made no apologies. He did the will of His Father. Not my will, but thine be done.

I have come to do my Father's will. I have come that they might have life, have it abundantly. For this reason came I into the world to bear witness to the truth.

Sometimes people hate the truth. There are things going on in our government right now where the truth of fraud, waste, and abuse is being exposed and there are people who are wanting to shoot the messenger instead of fix the revealed problems who are endeavoring to achieve a kind of self-righteousness by what they oppose. Build a straw man, set fire to it, that makes me a good person.

No, it doesn't. It means you've been blinded. The God of this world blinds the minds of those who are not walking by faith, those who are faithing not.

Otherwise, the light of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine to them. What is the example of Christ? What is the image of Christ? He came as a servant. He did not claim His status and His standing, His rectitude, His righteousness.

He simply proclaimed the word of God. He lived it out. He was obedient even to death.

And that has to be us. We don't live our lives to please people. We are not daunted or set back or deflected or distracted by the opinions of people who do not know God.

They don't know His word. They are not led by His spirit. They don't understand fellow servanthood because they themselves are not serving God and the Lord Jesus as bond slaves.

That is our identity. We are here to serve. You think about military operations.

Why do they call it the service? I served in the armed forces. He was in the service. Why do they call it that? Your personal well-being is set aside.

And if someone says in World War I, come out of the trench and charge the opposition through the barbed wire and the mustard gas and the artillery shells, the mortar shells, the hails of water-cooled machine guns, really first used in that conflict, massive casualties, I am in the service. I am engaged in something that is bigger than myself, that is more important than my life or my death. That concept has almost been completely lost.

Everyone thinks, well, we shouldn't do anything that we don't like or might endanger us or be harmful to us. And yet it is a beautiful picture. This is why Paul again and again returns to military metaphors, putting on the armor of God, helmet of salvation, shield of faith, breastplate of righteousness, waist girded with truth, feet shod with the gospel of peace, sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

It's all military. We saw in the pastoral epistles the idea of serving as one in the military, of competing as one in athletics, of pushing for something that is greater and beyond ourselves. Paul says, I consider, Romans 8, 18, our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared.

They're just not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us and through us, that we will reflect, that we will represent by God's grace, through God's power, God's provision, God's Son, the Lord Jesus, God's Spirit. One day in verse 21, the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. The rescue of the planet, the restoration of the environment, the new heavens and the new earth are not just projects that God has underway and we're going to be observers.

God is going to do that because of us, for us. Notice in verse 21, creation is set free from bondage to decay and it is brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. God isn't doing it because he's planting a garden that he wants to view from his throne.

The new heavens and the new earth are for his children. They are for us. A far cry from provision for a slave, quarters and food.

We serve now. We will glory in the inheritance that belongs to the family of God in the future. Notice, we know the whole creation, verse 22, has been groaning together in the pangs of childbirth until the present time.

Not only that, we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit. We are still in service mode. We are still dedicated as bond slaves and our job is to serve.

The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve. We are here in his place to serve and expend our lives in the service of God's plan and purpose. We who have the first fruits of the spirit groan inwardly.

We wait eagerly for what? Our adoption as sons. It's future. People who say, I'm a child of the king.

I have privileges. I'm royal family of God and the angels are going to descend with plates of

man and I'm going to expect blessing and honor and glory and accomplishment and all sorts of wonderful benefits haven't got the chronology straight. We have the momentary light affliction phase now.

This would be like the Lord Jesus trying to stride manfully into Jerusalem and set up a throne when he hasn't gone to the cross yet. When he hasn't accomplished his purpose of redemption and reconciliation and propitiation. We are here to be reflections of God's grace and God's glory.

To be representatives of God's truth. To be those who reflect the light that will draw others to him. Our reward, our inheritance, our future opportunities beyond imagination are just that.

Future. And to begin to expect or demand. Grant that we think the kingdom is just around the corner and I want to sit in this chair.

My brother wants to sit in that chair. My mother says we should. This was my mom's idea so you know don't blame me.

Jesus says don't you realize there is a cup and a baptism and then we'll see. How do you do in the times of hardship? How do you do under pressure and persecution and affliction? How do you do when times are hard? Do you trust and obey? Do you rely on the provision of God? The strength of God that comes through the spirit and the word? Or are you waylaid by emotions and expectations and the opinions and the words of people? We wait for our adoption as sons eagerly in verse 23. The redemption of our bodies.

This body is a body of service and we know that our service is short because this body is wasting away. The time of slavery is short term. The time of sonship and heirship and enjoyment of eternal life is the next body that never wears out, that never dies.

So why would we not recognize service is of a limited time. Sonship, inheritance is eternal. Why groan and press for achievement and blessing, houses and barns full of grain in this life when our soul will be required of us and now we're in the next life.

What kind of body will that be? What kind of opportunities will there be? What kind of opinion will be rendered at the judgment? We wait for the redemption of our bodies. In this hope we were delivered. In this hope we were saved.

But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he can already see? If we're on the march for blessing and reward and gratification in this life, Jesus said when the Pharisees get the respect of people, they stand on the street corners making long prayers, they drop big bags of money in and they do it to be seen by men, they have their reward. That's not hope.

Hope that is seen is no hope at all. We hope for what we do not yet see. We wait for it patiently.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't even know how to pray, but the Spirit intercedes

on our behalf. He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to will of God.

Then you come to 828 and following. With this as context, does it make sense that God will work all things together for good to those who love Him and who are the called according to His purpose, who understand that we are bond slaves now. We are sons indeed in the future.

The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons. But it's not unlike the count of Montecristo who has treasure waiting for him, but he's got to spend some time in prison to get there. There are other analogies.

But that is the background and that is the context when you come to Romans 828, all things working together for good. Do we understand where we are in the large program of God? This is a time of service. This is a time of hardship and endurance in many ways.

Are we faithful? Do we live our lives to please God? Or do we live our lives to please ourselves and hope that God will chip in and try to please us also? He is our Heavenly Father. We pray to Him as Father, not Master. The model prayer? Disciples say, Lord, teach us to pray.

He doesn't say, O Master in Heaven, does He? Our Father who art in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread. There are heavenly truths that we have not yet entered into.

Your kingdom come. But right now, your will be done on earth. We do the will of the Father on earth, looking for the expectation that it will also be done in Heaven, especially in the ages to come.

So, think about this now. We are servants of God. We are bond slaves of God, and we view ourselves in that light at the present.

Today, God is providing for me. God is equipping me. God is sending me forth to serve, just as the Lord Jesus came to serve and to put His life on the line for many in the ages to come.

God will evaluate our service. If we are faithful in a few things, we will be ruler over many things. But look again at what He told James, our author, in my opinion, and John.

Matthew 20. Whoever desires to be great among you. In verse 26 of Matthew, whoever desires to become great, and this is honestly great in the eyes of God.

I don't care if anybody else thinks I'm great. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord judged me great? If you want to be great, be a servant. Serve now, greatness later.

Obedient to death, God has highly exalted Him. Just as the Son of Man did, we should do. That is the message here.

We have now gotten our first phrase in James covered. But the very James, in my view, who heard these words from the Lord Jesus, if you really want to be great, serve, be a doulos. Notice

how the letter opens.

Of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm a slave. I heard it, I understood it, and I am living my life in that light. What may happen in terms of the right hand and the left hand isn't of interest to me.

I'm not even going to tell you if I'm an apostle, if I'm a brother. I am James, a slave of God, and that's enough. I represent God.

I am speaking in this letter, inspired truth from God for you. That is my identity. That is my value.

If you value the Word of God, you're going to see it, identify it, hear it, and respond to it. Not because I am the author, but because I'm bringing it to you from God. Just as in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord, the messenger of the Lord brought God's Word.

He didn't have to prove he was an angel. Somebody didn't say, well, can you flap your wings? Can you bring down a bolt of lightning? How do I know you're an angel? The message carried its own authority. Same thing here.

We can live a life of meaning and purpose, responding to the authority of our Father in heaven. We now serve as slaves. We will one day glory in the inheritance as children of God if we get this message and follow it as James did.

Well, this is going to bring us to the 12 tribes scattered. This is a fascinating phrase. To whom is this written and why? It doesn't say to the Gentiles.

It doesn't say to the people in Jerusalem. If it's Jerusalem James, why is he not writing a letter to leave behind in the church and they can read it after he's gone? This is sent forth to scattered Jews. Who are they? Why is the letter addressed to them? We'll see that next time.

Close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this training phase where we can learn and grow in grace and knowledge in profound ways that could only pertain in a fallen world, with a fallen nature, and with an active adversary, to grow our faith, to learn our skills, to strengthen our faith and our faithfulness. We thank you for our challenges.

We thank you for those blessings and provisions that enable us to meet them, the encouragement we receive from your spirit, the guidance and light on our path from your word. We pray that we can be worthy of those blessings that come to those who are adopted as your children, who look forward to a future in your presence where much wider opportunities for service and function will pertain. We pray that in the meantime, your grace will be with us, that the Holy Spirit will find us willing and able to experience the baptism and to drink the cup so that we can stand at judgment and receive those wonderful words, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.