

James 25-07-27b

We are looking at this tremendously applicable, rubber meets the road, high traction section of God's Word here in James chapter 1, where we are reminded that God is the giver of every good gift. He gives us wisdom when we ask. He doesn't provide it when we're not asking for it.

The Lord Jesus has said, if people aren't asking us for wisdom, don't give it. Don't cast your pearls before swine. Don't give what is holy to the dogs.

God doesn't do that with us. If we lack wisdom, it doesn't say God sees that you have a lack of wisdom and He's just going to start talking to you. We come and ask, and those who ask receive.

Those who seek find. Those who knock find the door opened for them. But there is initiative that precedes the response.

And God treats us that way, and this is how we are to deal with others, so that we do not create unnecessary conflict. In God's time and in God's way, He may bring people to the point of being receptive. We can slow that process down by throwing pearls and handing out what is holy when the time is not right.

The Holy Spirit will lead us. We have to have the fruit of the Spirit, one part of which is self-control, to bridle the tongue, to hold back. People say bridle the tongue means don't commit verbal sins.

No, it means to be disciplined any time we are speaking. We can say, well, it's okay to speak because I'm speaking the truth. Look how many times the Lord Jesus remained silent.

As a lamb before its shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth. It isn't that He didn't have something to say, but it was a completely unreceptive audience. Interestingly, He spoke to Pilate, who did seem to be more receptive than Herod and some of the others with whom He dealt during the time of His trial and elsewhere in His ministry.

But God birthed us by the word of truth, and that is what should define us. You have this emphasized in 2 Corinthians 4. You can look at what Paul says to the Corinthians when he says, we came to you and we did not falsify the word. 2 Corinthians 4. Verse 1, Paul says, we know that if our earthly house, this tent is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands.

That's chapter 5. He says in chapter 4, therefore, since we have this ministry, this ministry of revealing the glory of God, as with an unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, being transformed from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness or handling the word of God deceitfully.

This is where you get into the false teachers, false prophets, which Jesus is going to warn about as we continue in Matthew chapter 7. We do not handle the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, revelation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. These are the receptive ones. They have a conscience that is willing to hear the truth, that is seeking the truth in the sight of God.

If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. They don't get it. Holy things being given to dogs, pearls before swine, they're veiled.

They're minds the God of this world has blinded, who do not believe. Otherwise, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine unto them. We do not preach ourselves, we preach Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves, your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And it returns to that idea of glory that ends chapter three. It is the good news of Jesus Christ.

This is the truth that we selectively share. You don't broadcast it to the pigs. We are to keep counsel.

We are to bridle our tongue. If you flip back from 2 Corinthians back to Matthew chapter 7, as the Lord Jesus continues in this section of the Sermon on the Mount, we have already seen, ask and it will be given in 7.7. Those who ask receive and those who seek find and so on. So in verse 13, enter by the narrow gate.

Wide is the gate, broad is the way that leads to destruction. There are many who go in by it. And remember, it says enter by the narrow gate.

When you look at the parallel in Luke, you find that he says, strive to enter. It's the agonizimai in Luke 13.24. This takes work. It takes effort.

We have to pay attention. It isn't automatic. We're not carried along on a stretcher of Holy Spirit power.

We have to work agonizimai to enter by that narrow gate. And this means pay attention, have the Word of God and apply it. So this narrow way and narrow gate means that if we are on the right path, we're probably not going to see very many other people with the same appreciation, the same understanding, the same fellowship.

It is narrow. Few there be that find it. And if you find yourself in a large auditorium with hundreds and hundreds of people, it's time to check and make sure you haven't somehow taken an exit ramp from the narrow road.

Jesus said there are few who travel this road. It is going to be a small, hardy group. And we

should not be surprised when we're looking for opportunities to spread the light, to share what is holy, to talk about the glory of God's truth as a pearl and find that it's unappreciated.

It glances off. It doesn't attract interest. It doesn't create questions and further inquiry.

We shouldn't be surprised. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate. Few there be that find it.

You look at verses 15 through 20, and this is beware of false prophets, those who are giving a version that purports to be truth and is not. Beware of false prophets. They look like sheep.

They're covered in wool. They're wearing sheep's clothing, but inwardly they have other desires. Remember what James said earlier in our passage? We are tested.

We are tempted. We are drawn away by our own desires and seduced. These false prophets have been seduced and they are now seducing others.

They are ravenous inwardly. They have something that needs to be satiated, that needs to be satisfied. Some desire other than a love of God's truth.

They're ravening wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Notice in verse 20, you will know them by their fruits.

What kind of fruits? I've heard people use this passage to claim that if someone presents a truth from the word of God and it hurts their feelings, that's bad fruit. You say that homosexuality is an abomination. This was the specific example.

This is an individual who claims to be a God-fearing, Bible-loving Christian, and yet embraces homosexuality personally and says that anyone who preaches against it and says that we should separate from it is bearing bad fruit. If we were in line with the scriptures, what we preach and teach and practice wouldn't hurt someone's feelings and that this is the bad fruit of which Jesus speaks. Not so.

What is the fruit? What is the fruit? We saw pure religion and undefiled is to visit widows and orphans in their affliction, to be watchful for the needs of those who don't have someone to look out for them. And when they are in our periphery, remember, we are to be salt and light. And one of the things is light doesn't have an effect as it travels.

It has an effect where it lands, where it hits, where it touches. When light touches something, now light has an effect. Salt doesn't do anything in the shaker or in the container when the salt comes in contact with food, comes in contact with something.

That's when it has its benefit. Uh, you don't know if salt has lost its savor until it contacts the tongue. So our pure and undefiled religion is to be beneficial to those in genuine need.

They don't have some other form of God given provision for them. If they're in a family, their family should be their provision. If it's a godless family and is not providing, they are essentially

a widow or an orphan.

And we have opportunities there. But we have to be so careful to be watchful for opportunities to visit the needy when they have a genuine need and they will respond taking that aid as from the Lord. They're not sponging.

They're not taking advantage. They are not using us to further their own ends. You're not enabling them to continue down a bad path.

You're not sponsoring drug addiction or drunkenness or other forms of perversion and evil. You're not becoming a co-conspirator and an accessory after the fact for evil. We aid those who have a genuine need.

And when they receive the aid, this draws them closer to God. If you begin aiding someone and there's no movement toward God, there's no reflection of the glory of God, there isn't thankfulness, time to do something different. Widows and orphans are widows indeed and orphans indeed.

Like the poor in James 1 who will rejoice in their eventual exaltation because they believe the promises of God. So this is the fruit. You will know them by their fruit.

Flip over back to James. I'm having you jump around in your Bible. It's good for us to rustle the pages.

Go to James 3. What is genuine fruit? You will know a false teacher because he will not have good fruit. So James 3, verse 17 and 18. The wisdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Without partiality, we're going to get a section about partiality coming up very soon here in James. If you see a well-dressed person come in and you see someone shabby and you treat the well-dressed person well and you treat the shabby person shabby, that's partiality. Without partiality, who looks beyond the external, man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks on the heart.

We should endeavor by the power of God to look on the heart and you can have poor people that have a hard heart. And that's not someone to help. You can have a well-off person who recognizes themselves to be needy and that is someone to help.

The fruit of righteousness in verse 18 of James 3 is sown in peace by those who make peace. Notice, this does not stir up strife, division, contention. The wisdom that is from above is peaceable.

It reflects the fruit of the Spirit. So a false prophet, you're going to find that those who listen to a false prophet do not manifest and bear the fruit of the Spirit. It is going to be divisive.

It is going to be contentious. It's going to create heartache and hardship. It is going to confuse.

It is going to confound. So Jesus says, beware of false prophets. We come back to Matthew chapter seven.

You will know them by their fruits. And he says this twice. He says it at the beginning and he says it at the end.

You don't get grapes from thorn bushes. You don't get figs from thistles. There will be pain.

There will be bleeding. There will be sharp contact involved with false prophets. Good trees bear good fruit.

Bad trees bear bad fruit. Good trees don't bear bad fruit. Bad trees don't bear good fruit.

Why does Jesus stress this and emphasize it? Every good tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire, the fire of judgment. So it is important for us to pay attention. Are we receiving the truth or is this false teaching, false proclamation, false prophecy? And then in verse 21, you have the outcome at the judgment.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father. This is where we're going in James. Be a doer of the word and not a hearer only, right? Jesus anticipates that teaching here.

Notice the difference between saying and doing in verse 21 of Matthew 7. There are people who say, Lord, Lord, I acknowledge Jesus as Lord. He's the king. I'm pursuing the kingdom.

We're talking a great fight here. We're speaking prophetically. We're talking against evil in high places.

We've got a long screed that we publish on our social media or whatever it might be talking a great fight. But not everyone who says, Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. It is the ones who do the will of my father in heaven to enter the kingdom of heaven.

We have to understand and practice the will of the father who is in heaven. He repeats the word heaven for a reason. People say, don't be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good.

We have to be heavenly minded. To be heavenly minded is to do good in the earth. They are not opposites.

Heavenly minded people will do the will of the father on earth. That's what the Lord Jesus did. I've not come to do my will, but the will of my father in heaven.

Unless we know how to do the will of the father, which is revealed in the word of truth. This is why we're a Bible church. This is why we need to wake up every morning thinking back, get a devotional, review notes, play 10 or 15 minutes of a Bible class, find something on the radio, find streams in the desert or whatever you use to get our mind on the word of truth.

That's why we're here. There's no point in spending the day just to get things done, just to survive, just to get through it. The word of truth birthed us, the word of truth defines us, and the word of truth is what makes us fruitful.

The fruit of the spirit can only be born by people who know and do the word. That is the good fruit. And Jesus emphasizes this.

Many will say to me in that day, Matthew 7, 22, Lord, Lord, notice four times now they have called him Lord. These people say, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord. We'll repeat your title.

We'll repeat this convenient idea that you are the Lord, the Lord of glory. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? Notice again, prophesying, they're speaking, they're talking and using the name. Look how many times the name of the Lord Jesus is emphasized here.

They say, Lord, Lord, in verse 21, they say, Lord, Lord, in verse 22, they prophesy in his name. In verse 22, they cast out demons in his name. Verse 22, they do many wonders in his name.

Verse 22, by my count, that's seven uses of the name of the Lord. Lord four times and in his name three times. It's all about the Lord, but it's all them talking.

They're telling the Lord that this is what they have done. I will declare, Jesus says in verse 23, I never knew you depart from me. You who work iniquity, your deeds are evil.

You practice lawlessness. Anomos, anomia, has an alpha privative in front of the word for the law, the scriptures, the word of truth, the word of God. They are without the word.

They are without God's law, without his truth. They can do nothing but evil, and it is not what they say. It is what they do.

This is where James is headed with be doers of the word and not hearers only. Lord, Lord, we heard your name. We spoke in your name.

We've done these things in your name. According to us, Jesus doesn't say, indeed, you did cast out demons in my name. Indeed, you did many wonders in my name.

Indeed, you prophesied in my name. Jesus doesn't acknowledge that anything they say is true. He says, what you did is evil.

What you did is lawless. So it doesn't matter what kind of a label you try to slap on it or what kind of a Lord wrapper you want to put on it. I did not know you.

There was no relationship. Scary stuff, because they are going to be alive and around and observing in the day when the Lord Jesus is king of the kingdom, they will be there and they will find themselves cast out. They will not be able to enter.

You remember our study a few weeks back on the difference between seeing the kingdom

from the outside, entering the kingdom to see what's on the inside and having an inheritance in the kingdom. These are levels of existence, primarily talking about Israel, but with application to us. What levels of privilege and opportunity will we have in the kingdoms to come? Will we see it from a distance? Will we be able to enter and enjoy the blessings and have contact with the wonders and the beauty of it? Will we have an inheritance where we own a piece of the rock? We have a mansion, so to speak.

We have a dwelling place. We have an assignment that we live in the city because we work in the city. We serve and we rule and reign with the Lord Jesus.

We sit with Him on His throne. We have all of those wonderful overcomer blessings as inheritance, ownership, participation, investment, presence in a real and meaningful and useful way to the Lord. One thing to see it, something else to enter it and enjoy its benefits, and something still more to be a part of it, a functional part as an inheritor.

So, not everyone who says these things. Therefore, verse 24 of Matthew 7, we're still talking about God giving birth to us by the word of truth. And what do we do with the word? Are we slow to speak and quick to hear? We want to listen to the word.

We want to figure out how it pertains and applies to what I'm doing today. And when I wake up in the morning, how does the word of God apply tomorrow? Hearing it and immediately being distracted by circumstances and people and conversations, and I've got to get in my car and go somewhere. I have to work.

I have to participate. I've got these things that need to be done. The schedule requires that I be here.

I've got stuff to read. I've got issues in the news I want to keep up with. There's relaxation and entertainment and life goes on.

I'm carried along by what American life is in this current time. That is not why we're here. Any unbeliever can do that.

We are not here to do what any unbeliever can do. We have been given birth in a supernatural way by God's word of truth. That should define us.

It should motivate us. It's a part of our hope. It's the hope of standing at the judgment.

It's the hope of entering into the fullness of resurrection life and eternal life and kingdom life in the ages that are to come. There is no point in being alive and drawing breath if that is not what absolutely defines us. So this is what James is telling these first century scattered members of the 12 tribes.

It is still God's word. The Lord Jesus has come and he is the word incarnate. But as ever, it is God's word of truth that matters, that gives us life and breath, that says who we are and what

we should do, where we are and where we're going.

So Jesus has covered this in his ministry. James is reiterating it, giving it fresh life and breath for these people a few decades later. So Jesus says, whoever hears these sayings of mine, verse 24, notice hearing the word, the sayings of the Lord Jesus are the eternal word of truth.

So 724 of Matthew, whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, does them, I will liken him to a wise man. He's got the wisdom that God grants when you ask for it. He's a wise man and he built his house on the rock and the rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house and it did not fall.

Times of testing, times of perasmus, times of philipsis, of trouble, when widows and orphans need help, the rains come, the storms beat on that house and it stands. It does not fall because it is founded on the rock. But verse 26, everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them, does not apply them, does not plow them into thinking and action and speaking, doesn't bridle the tongue, doesn't develop and cultivate and produce the fruit of the spirit, doesn't let the seed of the word sink into the soil and produce 30 fold, 60 fold and a hundred fold the powers in the seed.

The fruit is in what God provides. We ask for it, he gives it to us and we cultivate it and it grows by God's grace and in God's power does not do them. He will be like a foolish man, a man who lacks wisdom, who builds his house on the sand house, looks good until the storm comes.

Remember in the parable of the soils, the seed went into the soil and sprouted and looked great, but it was shallow. And once the sun came and beat on it, it had no root and it withers and dies. And it is as though the seed was never there.

Same thing, building your house on the sand, the rains descended, the floods came, the winds blew and beat on that house and it fell. And it was a catastrophic fall, catastrophic. And verse 28, so it was when Jesus ended these sayings, these communications of the word of truth, the people were astonished at his teaching because he taught them as one having authority, not like the scribes.

The scribes, false prophets. They can talk about God, but the word of truth does not get conveyed. It doesn't give them a rock to build their house on.

When Jesus teaches, here's something they can build on, something that matters, the word of truth. So important to understand both the present and the future implications of not only hearing the word, but putting it into practice. It ought to matter every waking hour of the day.

There's no point in living otherwise. We get so distracted, so deflected, so immersed. I've used this illustration many times, but you're watching a really well done movie and it's suspenseful.

Somebody's walking through the house and there's danger in there and the lights are off and suddenly a cat screeches or a door slams. The person jumps and everybody watching the movie

jumps because you're immersed. You forget it's a movie and your body's reactions are those of a person actually in that situation.

It's just full immersion. We cannot afford to be so immersed in this life that we forget that we're really living a different life with different priorities. Don't get too much in this world.

So we have been begotten by the word of truth. Leave Matthew now. We're done in Matthew 7. Turn over to 1 Peter 1. James 1 Peter, very next couple of pages here.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion. Peter is writing to the same people that James is. Verse 3, blessed be the God and father.

Same father James is talking about. Same father Jesus was talking about in Matthew 7. Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again. Begotten us, given us birth and life.

How? To a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the good news, the resurrection. You remember how important the resurrection is to Christian faith.

It is central. It is an inseparable part of the gospel when Paul is explaining it to the Corinthians. Skip down to verse 23.

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible through the word of God, which lives and abides forever. We have been given birth in verse 3 by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. New life, resurrection life.

23, it's not corruptible, it's incorruptible. This is a birth and we will never die. Through the word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Flesh is as grass, the grass withers, the flower fades. But the word of the Lord, verse 25, abides forever. We've been given birth by that word.

We live by that word. We accomplish righteousness by faith in that word. And when we arrive at the judgment, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful in a few things. I will make you ruler over many things. We are prepared because we know the heavenly father.

We know the Lord Jesus Christ. We are qualified to enter the heavenly kingdoms. It is a heavenly life.

Glory has been revealed to us from glory to glory, as we saw earlier. It is a living hope, birthed by incorruptible seed of the word. And the final passage I'll give you, 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 13.

1 Thessalonians 2, 13. We thank God without ceasing. When you received the word of God,

which you heard from us, you received it.

You welcomed it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. And you can circle that on the page because that is a present active participle. You who are believing, you who are believers, you welcomed the word of truth, and you are continuing to express your faith in it.

You are living by faith in it. It is an ongoing present tense belief. Cannot emphasize enough.

We are born in the word of truth. We live by the word of truth. We produce fruit by the word of truth.

False teaching does not produce fruit. It's thorns and thistles. Its end is to be burned.

It is wood, hay, and stubble. We go to God and request it. We ask and seek and knock with full faith that he is going to deliver the truth.

There is no hour of the day that is worth anything if we are not looking at it and living it by means of the truth, cultivating the fruit of the spirit, monitoring ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Are we building our house on the rock or are we building it on sand? This is so of a piece with Jesus teaching, with Paul's teaching, with Peter's teaching, James and John. The gospel of John is all about the word, the word of truth.

Revelation chapter two and three address specifically to us. We are overcomers by faith in the promises of God, in the word of truth. Don't waste time.

Redeem the time. The days are going to be evil if we do not redeem the time and we do it in the spirit and in the power of God's word. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

We're going to pick up and get into the doer of the word and not hearer only next time. Father, thank you for the crystal clear guidance you give us, the wonderful provision you make for us, the example of the Lord Jesus, who did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from you. We pray that we can follow in his footsteps, that by the word and the spirit available to us, we can grow in grace and knowledge of our savior and in doing so produce all of that fruit that reflects your glory and prepares us for service and function now and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.