

James 25-08-10b

We are looking at James chapter 1 and we are encountering the second chapter after this section that says, lay aside filthiness, the overflow of wickedness, and receive with humility the implanted word. When you hear implanted word you cannot help but think of the parable of the soils. The Lord Jesus is the sower, he scatters the seed of the word.

What does it do in our souls? Receive it with humility. Notice humility is the environment in which faith can function. One of the characteristics of selfishness, self-centeredness, and a desire for self-gratification is the humility leaves and we become a priority.

How do I feel? How am I treated? Rodney Dangerfield, a comedian, some of you may be too young to remember, but his famous tagline was, I don't get no respect. And then he would tell these funny anecdotes about the treatment that he would receive. But, when we begin to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, as it says in another place, this opens the door to that attitude that outside challenge, outside testing, outside temptation is going to hook into and hook up with and conceive sin.

So, we look at ourselves and it's one question to say, well, am I faithful? I certainly believe what I hear in Bible class, I believe what I read in my Bible, I believe the stuff that came across in a devotional or whatever I do for my daily reminder. So, I'm a person of faith. I believe, I'm a believer, I'm all in favor of what the word of God says.

One of the better ways to check and see if we are really in the faith is, how self-centered am I feeling at this moment, in this conversation, in this situation? Am I waiting for this person to stop talking so that I can vindicate myself or defend myself or justify myself or push my point of view and make sure people understand that I know what I'm talking about. I'm worthy of respect here. You need to respect me, you need to pay attention to me, you need to treat me with the elevation that I deserve.

Danger, danger, danger. That ought to be like the bells and the flashing red lights at a railroad crossing. You're going to get hit by the train of pride.

Pride goeth before a fall, haughty spirit before destruction. Humility is the key. We look at ourselves as poor, no matter what the context, no matter what the situation.

I am a needy person. I am only here by God's grace. I live on God's grace.

I am supported by God's word and God's spirit because in and of myself, as Jesus said, without me you can do nothing. I can do nothing of value. I can do all kinds of things that are going to go up in the flash fire of wood, hay and stubble.

But we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are disciples. Is God going to choose us in the future the way the Lord Jesus chose the twelve out of the multitude of disciples? Because we are people of genuine faith, faith that matters, constant reminding ourselves, I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus and I am a witness to those who come in contact with me.

Am I salt? Am I light? Do others see what's going on in my life? My good works, be doers of the word, that's works, not hearers only. Jesus said, let your light so shine before men, your light,

that they see your good works and glorify your Father. They don't see your good works and glorify you.

And you're not looking to be glorified. You do your good works and people say, look at the blessings that God the Father has sent me through this person. We don't want to be glorifying ourselves and we are not looking to be glorified by others.

When our light shines and people see good emanating from us and blessing them, blessing others, they should glorify our Father who is in heaven. It should be a reflection and hopefully people will be drawn to God, believers or unbelievers, to a renewed faith, to be encouraged by contact with us. So that's the idea here and if you go back to Luke chapter 6 and the Lord Jesus is delivering what we say for shorthand is the Sermon on the Plain, it has many of the same concepts as the Sermon on the Mount, but this is a different time, it is a different crowd, it's a different geographical context and these truths are turned in the light slightly so that we see them from a modified perspective.

And the Beatitudes, if you will, being poor, being hungry, weeping now, being hated and misunderstood and disrespected now, have your name reviled, be misconstrued, be accused falsely of things that are not true, have your motives impugned. You see this in politics all the time. Well, the only reason he's doing that is for this, and it's blatantly, patently untrue, and it is a criminally sinful thing to accuse someone without real knowledge and to try to drag their name in the dirt for political gain or to gossip about someone in our periphery to try to pull them down a notch or two. This gratifies a sinful desire in us. That's not humility and that's not faith. We need to identify it and root it out.

So to view ourselves as poor and miserable and blind and naked without what God provides, in and of ourselves we can do nothing, we can be nothing, we accomplish nothing. We are hopeless, helpless and useless, but by God's grace with what comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ, the privilege of having a treasury of the word in our souls and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to activate it and implement it and transform us through it so that what we do now counts.

Ordinary things. Most of us have jobs whether we are getting paid for them or we just have tasks we need to perform on a daily basis. We have things that need to get done, so do a lot of other people. This guy mows his lawn, I mow my lawn. This guy brush hogs his pasture, I brush hog the pasture. This guy does this, so do I. But if I remember who I am and why I am here, and I mow my lawn and I brush hog the pasture and I perform my paid work as unto the Lord and I endeavor to be faithful, to be humble, to be self-sacrificial, to view myself as unworthy except by the grace of Christ that I have been purchased with the precious blood of Christ, all of my worth, all of my value rests in Him and because of Him.

So I am poor, I am hungry, I need more of God's word. I am misunderstood by the world. That's okay. We don't really experience some of the persecution you find in other parts of the world or in other contexts, and I praise God for that. I've got plenty of challenges without also being reviled to the point of people attacking me verbally or materially. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy when you encounter hardships. Very same thing James says: count it all joy when you fall into these various trials.

Here are some of the specific varieties that can apply at different times in our lives, and just remember even God's prophets, God's spokesmen imbued with Holy Spirit power and communicating God's word of truth were misunderstood, hated, reviled, attacked. And don't think you're doing something wrong if circumstances are rough, people testing in particular. Just remember the best of people, God's prophets up to and including the great prophet capital P, the Lord Jesus Christ, hated, reviled, misunderstood. So it isn't what you're doing; you don't have to question your faith or your dedication to the Lord.

Then in verse 24, woe to you who are rich, you have received your consolation, woe to you who are full, you shall be hungry, if you say we see, you're going to end up blind. Woe to you who laugh now for you shall mourn and weep, you think of the rich man and Lazarus, now you're in torment, rich man and Lazarus is comforted and it isn't because he happened to be rich, he might have inherited it, he might have been a shrewd businessman to become rich, what was the problem? His riches blinded him to the opportunity to practice true religion to widows and orphans, that is the place keeper for anyone that is in our periphery, that we can touch like salt and light and benefit and be a genuine blessing, operating in humility, operating as unto the Lord. If that man feasting at his sumptuous banquet table had looked down the walkway to the gate and seen Lazarus and said, this is my brother, this is a fellow Israelite, he's fallen on hard times, he's got sores and the dogs are licking him, let's go get him, let's bring him in, let's seat him at the table and give him a meal, let's put some salve on his wounds, let's find him a comfortable place to recuperate, let's take care of him as I would a widow or an orphan, that would be true religion.

Because the rich man did not practice that, where does he end up in the future, where does Lazarus end up in the future? He patiently waits, he doesn't shake his fist and curse God and die as Job's wife counseled, he's patient and he ends up right next to Abraham, being comforted. And used by the Lord as an example, woe to you when men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. What's going to happen to the false prophets? Human popularity, human acceptance doesn't count when it is based on superficialities.

Now look at verse 27, we're getting so many parallels here to our passage in James chapter one and chapter two. I say to you who hear, I say to you who hear, you want to hear the word and then you want to do it. I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

This would be Lazarus out at the gate with his swords and the dogs, praying that the rich man will come to his senses, that the scales will fall from his eyes and he will see that his priorities are misguided. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. From him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Don't be selfish, don't build your self-esteem or your self-respect or your self-worth, don't build your opinion of yourself or your impression of where you stand in the community based on whether you suffer a loss, whether you are disrespected. It doesn't mean that there isn't room for self-defense, it doesn't mean that you just let people come in and walk off with everything in your house. This is attitude, these are emblems, they are almost metaphors for an attitude of heart that says, easy come, easy go.

Job had this attitude, the Lord gave, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. If man is working to my detriment, if man is subtracting and taking away from me, I'm going to look to

the Lord to recompense, to sustain. Maybe he took that away for a reason, maybe that's something I don't need at this point in my life.

I'm going to trust God, I'm not going to try to recover a loss, I'm not going to try to fend off loss because I'm that important and my stuff is that important. It's attitude that is being represented here, not the specific, you know, in real life, how many times does somebody actually come up and steal your coat? And you say, hey, wait a minute, I've got a raincoat in the closet, let me bring that to you. Most of the time you don't know who took your stuff if you get robbed.

This is attitude of heart, this is how we become doers of the word and not hearers only. What is Jesus saying here? To you who hear, this is what you should do. You should apply this attitude of humility, consider yourself poor, consider yourself hungry, consider yourself sorrowful, that I am dependent upon the grace of God, not myself.

If I depend on my own strength, that's a sorry way to be. Give to everyone who asks of you and from him who takes away your goods, do not ask them back. Give to everyone who asks of you, can you imagine if you just tried to take this literally? Any time you get a solicitation in the mail, any time a scammer calls you up and says, hey, you know, give me your bank account information, I'm your bank, wink wink, we're just verifying your account, so would you mind giving me your account, your password? They're asking of you, if you just look at this superficially and legalistically, give to everyone who asks of you.

I just got a thing in the mail, you know, please send money to the Republican party, please send money to the Democrat party. Well they ask, Jesus said, give to anyone who asks of you. So, am I being disobedient to the word? No.

What is the context here? It begins back in what is labeled in your Bible, the Beatitudes. The attitude in your heart is such that when you are guided by the Holy Spirit, when you are soaked in God's truth, you will know when this is a genuine request for something that you're being asked for and you give it. It might be your time, it might be your talent, it might be your skill, it might be something that you have and maybe even something somewhat precious, but you will have the discernment and the discretion from the truth and the Spirit to parse that situation and say, this will glorify God, this is a good work and it will reflect the glory of God.

Sending money to somebody who asks you just as a knee-jerk response is crazy and that's not what the Bible says. It's done heartily as unto the Lord. And there are cases where someone will ask of us and it might be a little bit sacrificial, but that's what love is.

Love is sacrificial to self and beneficial to someone else. And we do it willingly, from the heart, as unto the Lord. This isn't a blanket statement for every single case.

It is in the context of let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. Do you think the Lord Jesus would contribute to the Pharisee party if they came and asked Him for a donation? Or the Sadducees? Or the Zealots? Or the Herodians? Any old somebody comes up to the Lord Jesus and asks Him and He says, well, okay. No.

Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. This is coming up in James, the royal law. Do unto others.

You're going to find this coming up in the near future. Verse 32. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. Love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who spitefully use you, it says in Matthew. Lend, hoping for nothing in return.

And your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. Once again, this requires discernment.

You don't just find any old evil person and express a kindness. There are opportunities where we are guided by the truth and guided by the Spirit. Maybe someone has an evil lifestyle maybe they are unthankful.

But there are situations where we will be and do anyway. Because that's what God does. Now, how does God express kindness to the unthankful and the evil? Does He bless them the way He blesses us? Does He provide for them the way He provides for us? Does He look out for them the way He does for us? What is the nature of God's kindness to the evil and the unthankful? He leaves an open door.

He does not judge them before the time. The Lord Jesus didn't even judge the demons before the time. There is a time of judgment and it is not yet.

I don't need to punish someone and try to punish them out of their evil ways. I don't have to rebuke them or look down on them and try to get them to be more thankful. We are to be sons of the Most High.

We are to treat others the way God treats them when they are unthankful and unholy. God does not express generosity. There is general grace.

I don't discriminate against someone because they are unthankful or evil when it comes to general things. Remember the rain falls on the just and the unjust? God doesn't stop the rain for the unjust. But does He bless their crops like He did Boaz? Does He look for and bless the 30-fold, 60-fold and 100-fold field for them because the rain falls? Rain is opportunity.

Rain is potential. We never close the door. How proactive is God with unbelievers? How involved is God in the lives of the unthankful and the evil? He is not personally involved at all.

But He does not judge them before the time. He does not punish them in this life. Why do the wicked prosper is the question in the Old Testament.

Why do the wicked prosper? Because the time of judgment is not yet. I am going to keep my hands off. I am not going to try to punish them.

I am not going to judge them. I am not going to try to frown and rebuke them into doing something different. I am going to not discriminate.

They say, don't discriminate on the basis that they have this whole list. Race, ethnic origin, sex, ethnicity. I forget what the list is.

But treat everybody the same when it comes to your general policy. When it comes to the outside circle of those who are not one another's and they are not neighbors, but nor are they enemies. In some cases, they are enemies.

And Jesus is going to talk about that. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.

So we do not say, well, they are in the fourth circle of love and because they are my enemy, I can give as good as I get. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life. Even in the outer circle, there is enemy love, which says, if I am in contact with them, I am not going to do evil.

I will do good. I am not going to curse them. I am going to bless them.

I am not going to revile them. I am going to pray for them. Because that is what humility does.

So, love your enemies in Luke 6.35. Do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. Son of someone is like someone. Jesus is talking to a crowd of disciples that includes women and he says, you will be sons of the Most High.

Because this is a metaphor. This is an emblem. You will emulate, like father, like son.

He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore, be merciful just as your father also is merciful. Be merciful the way the Father is merciful.

How far does the Father's mercy extend? Does he just save everyone regardless of how unthankful and evil they are? There is mercy. It is measured mercy. It is careful mercy.

It is perspicuous mercy. It is merciful and efficacious. It observes.

It goes a certain distance and no further. That is the mercy of God to those who are outside those inner circles. He does not punish before the time for individuals.

Be merciful. Notice back in James 2.13, judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

We are tempted in our self-righteousness, in our self-centeredness, in our perverse self-gratification to do the eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth thing. We see somebody malfunction. They hurt us.

We want to hurt them back. They cause a loss for us. We want to cause a loss for them.

Jesus says no. If this person costs you a coat, sit still. If it ends up costing you a cloak also, that's okay.

Look to the Father. Do not retort. Do not respond.

Do not react. Do not do the in-kind badness to them even though they have done it to you. That is the nature of the coat and the cloak.

That is the nature of the lend and don't expect it back. If someone takes your money unscrupulously, let them go. Look to the Lord.

He's got the cattle on a thousand hills. If that actually puts you in need, don't try to get it back from the guy that took it or the entity that took it or the government that took it. Look to the Lord.

That's the idea. And be merciful. Treat people with mercy looking ahead to the Day of Judgment where I hope and pray and I'm going to throw myself on the mercy of God.

God is merciful to those who are merciful. God is gracious to those who reflect His grace. So many parallels in the teaching of the Lord Jesus and I believe the author of our epistle of James heard that teaching repeatedly, learned it.

It was implanted and is now reflected under the ministry of the Spirit in this wonderful letter. Luke chapter 6, see the context. Mercy will triumph over judgment.

If you have a choice between mercy and judgment, choose mercy. Don't impute wickedness, don't gossip, malign, backbite, judge, try to inflict a penalty on people that you notice are malfunctioning. Judge not, condemn not, you will not be condemned.

Forgive and you will be forgiven. It's in the Lord's prayer. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

If we fail to forgive, we will fail to be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. This has to come from humility.

What do you have that you did not receive? Everything I have is a stewardship and if I am a careful steward, I'm not going to be frivolous, I'm not going to be knee jerk, I'm not going to be legalistic or unconscious in my giving. I'm going to give as unto the Lord. I'm going to give hoping that it glorifies God, that it is what God would want me to do with His stuff.

I am a steward left in charge of some of God's resources, what do I do with them? I'm not going to stupidly give them away, I'm going to carefully and prayerfully give them when needed. Whatever it is, time, skill, talent, resource, material goods, support, encouragement, conversation, speak the truth, spiritual gift function, whatever it may be, we do it as a gift. Give and it will be given to you.

Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom. Oh, I like that. I like the density of the gift from God.

What does James say in chapter 1? Every good and perfect gift. Every good gift and every perfect gift. He uses the word gift twice.

It will be given to you, pressed down, shaken together, running over, given into your bosom because this is all about the heart, it's all about our attitudes, it's about our thinking. This is what makes doing the word count. It isn't the externalities, it isn't the observable, it is what emanates from the heart.

Remember when Jesus said it isn't what goes into a man that defiles him, it's what comes out. Because out of the heart proceed good things or evil things. Good trees going to bear good fruit and so on.

For with the same measure that you use it will be measured back to you. This is a constant expression of hope, of expectation, of confidence of the future at the return of the Lord when we are evaluated. That's what I'm thinking about today.

That's what I'm thinking about as I do my work. That's what I'm thinking about as I converse, as I text, as I read and hear, listen and interact with my world, my people, other people, my presence and my interactions, my circumstances, my challenges, my blessings. I have one eye constantly on the future.

I want to receive those good gifts and those perfect gifts that come down from the Father of Lights. He's not going to change. There's no shadow of turning.

I want to qualify for those gifts. So I am going to be as generous as I can be. At the same time I'm as harmless as a dove but I'm as wise as a serpent.

I'm not a fool. I don't give away any old coat to any old person. I don't lend to any old person.

I want to be a son of the Most High. How does His mercy work? That's how I want my mercy to work. I want it to be careful.

I want it to leave an open door to create an opportunity to not be judgmental, to not be an agent of rebuke. I've got a hard enough time absorbing rebuke that I need without trying to rebuke others. That should be my attitude.

So, He spoke a parable. Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? Disciple is not above his teacher. Everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

Be like the Father in these areas of generosity and lending and interaction with others. Be like the Father. Think about how the Father treats those who are outside.

How can you say to your brother, Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye? Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye when you've got a plank in your own? You yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite. First remove the plank from your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye. We've got to fix our heart.

The eye is the window to the soul and it is our observation. We've got to change what we conclude from what we see. I see you've got a speck there.

You've got a problem. You're not seeing things rightly. I'm going to fix you.

I need to be sure I am fixed first. It's an attitude of heart. Verse 43, good tree doesn't bear bad fruit.

Bad tree doesn't bear good fruit. What is your nature? That determines whether the doing of the word will count or not. All of this heartburn about, well, you've got to have works.

James says so. Paul says you don't need works, you just need faith. We need faith according to both of them.

James says I will show you my faith by my works. Everybody agrees faith first. The difficulty comes in remembering that all of the works have to spring from faith and whatever is not a faith is sin.

And James and Paul and John by the way all agree on that as well. What kind of tree are you? Are you a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season? His leaf doesn't wither and whatever he does will prosper. It kind of departs from the metaphor.

Whatever we do will prosper. That's the same thing we saw in James chapter 1 by the way. God will bless us and prosper us.

Verse 45, a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good. This is what doing the word entails. Bringing good treasure out of his heart.

This is the word. This is the spirit. What we do is from the treasury in our heart.

The treasure that is put there by God. God's grace, God's power, God's discernment, God's wisdom. Sharing the good gifts and the perfect gifts that he has bestowed on us.

An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart. And if you look at the text note there, I'm not sure treasure of his heart is such a thing as an evil treasure. So some manuscripts don't have that phrase.

And it just says an evil man out of evil brings forth evil. An evil man brings forth evil. Either way what's in your heart comes out in your actions and is brought forth.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Out of the abundance of the heart. What do we have in James? You've got to bridle your tongue.

Verse 26 chapter 1. If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue. What's the key to bridling the tongue? Fix your heart. Get the plank out of your eye.

Have a good treasure. Because Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart. Do we have an abundance of anger? Do we have an abundance of self-centeredness? Do we have an abundance of the need to justify self, defend self, promote self, try to get people to think better of us? Is that the abundance in our heart? Or is it humility? Is the abundance what God has given me? I myself am poor.

I'm hungry. I'm sorrowful. And I'm a sorry sight.

I have an abundance of what God has supplied. And that's what comes out of my mouth. So I'm not harsh.

I'm not judgmental. I'm not critical if I follow these commands. Would God that we could always do so.

That we could always be doers of this word and not hearers only. Out of the abundance. Now, closing, look at verse 46.

Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say? You hear it and you say Lord, Lord, but you're not a doer of the word. You're a hearer and not a doer. You call me Lord.

How many things are done in the name of the Lord, in the name of Christianity, and it isn't what the Lord said? Whoever comes to me and hears my sayings and does them. Hears and does. Isn't this the heart of our passage in James 1.22? Come to me, hear my sayings, do them.

I'll show you what he's like. He's like a man building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. Flood came, stream beat vehemently against that house, could not shake it for it was founded on the rock.

That's what we want to be. That's what it is to be a hearer and a doer. And then he gives the opposite.

He who heard and did nothing. Is Jesus a Paul theologian or a James theologian on faith and works? The answer is yes. Both.

You hear and do nothing like a man builds his house on the earth without a foundation against which the stream beat vehemently and immediately it fell and the ruin of that house was great. Notice slightly different version of the parable. It's not a storm and rain.

It's a stream. It's a flood that comes on this occasion. Principle is the same.

So what does it mean to be both a hearer and a doer of the word? We look for transformation of our hearts, renewing of our minds. We look to ourselves first and ensure that we are a good tree. Plank is out of our eyes.

So many examples so that we can be a blessing and a benefit to others and we will know how to be generous, how to be merciful the way our father in heaven is merciful. Much more to come here in James. So practical, so helpful in our daily walk before the Lord.

And we'll pick up again next week. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the clarity with which you communicate to us how you want us to live, how we can be children indeed, not just adopted through the work of Jesus Christ, but children indeed in that we reflect your character, your mercy, your long-suffering, your self-sacrificial dealing with others.

We pray that as we reflect on this and look at our own lives and our own circumstances, our relationships, that God the Holy Spirit will give us a clear vision. The plank will not obstruct our view and we will be able to fully and truly implement these words from the Lord Jesus, from the apostles who reflected this teaching in their letters. And we pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.