

James 25-08-17b

We pick up our study now in James and having seen the importance of context, when it says be doers of the word, what word are we talking about? This is New Testament truth. The word of truth is the Lord Jesus. What he expressed, what he taught.

And these are the things that he instructed his apostles to teach. Remember in Matthew 28, 19 and 20, as you go make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe, teaching them to work out, teaching them to apply the things that I have commanded you to teach them. And we had that clarification when we did Matthew, it isn't anything Jesus ever said to the disciples, everybody else ought to do.

He said, remain in Jerusalem until you receive power. He said, meet me in Galilee. He said many things to the disciples, come up here on the mountain that applies specifically to them.

But when it says teaching them to observe all things whatsoever, I have commanded you to teach them. Teach these things, reflect these things. And Paul exploits this, what you have seen and heard from me do.

So what are the conditions? There is a sequence here and you can number these in the margin of your Bible. We want to make this happen, right? We're believers in the Lord Jesus. God had a purpose in saving us.

We want our souls to be delivered from our fallen nature. We want to rightly divide the word of truth and be workmen who are not ashamed. We want to have gold and silver and precious stones at the judgment.

We want to have function and opportunity and inheritance and blessing in the ages to come, as well as now. We want blessing in what we do in this life. Who doesn't want that? We all want it.

The question is, can we keep our focus on who we are, why we're here, what God has provided, and let the grace of God produce this in us? So what are the steps? They're laid out beautifully right here in this context. Look at verse 21. Verse 21 of James says, therefore, in light of what we have just reviewed, do what? Lay aside all filthiness.

This is the first requirement. Before we do anything else, before we come to Bible class, what do we need to do? As we come to Bible class, what do we need to do? Lay aside, tithami is the word that means to put or place, and apa means away. Separate from, put it in a separate place.

Remember, when we were looking at Paul talking about the coming of the Antichrist in Thessalonians, and he says, that day will not come except there comes first the apostasy, is what it says in your King James or New King James, but it's apostasia, the standing stasis away, apa. And that is actually a reference to the rapture. The day of the revelation of the Antichrist

and all of the breaking of the seals and the wrath that is to come is not going to come until after the separation.

That which restrains is taken out of the way, which is the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ. When the body of Christ is removed, then those last days will come. So when Paul talks about apostasis, he uses that apo prefix to talk about the separation.

Two things in different places. Same thing in our passage here. Therefore, place away, apotithami.

Place away, lay aside all filthiness. The thing about this is, this is an aorist participle. So a better translation is this has to come first.

Therefore, having laid aside. Aorist participle precedes the action of the main verb. Before you get to receiving or anything else, this has to come first.

This is why when we approach fellowship with other believers where we can speak the truth and love, really before we start anything, we need to check and see if there is a problem that we need to bring before the Lord to confess our sins so that he can forgive us and cleanse us. And we have the full-orbed ministry of the Holy Spirit to us. The Holy Spirit doesn't come and go.

It's not like a light switch. And I sinned, I'm out of fellowship and there's no Holy Spirit. I confess that flips the switch.

Now the Holy Spirit is back. He comes and goes. There's a commercial now for a particular credit card.

And if you think you lost it, you go to an app and you just flip a switch and your card is locked. And so in the commercial, the card is laying there on the table and then it just vibrates and disappears. And then it comes back.

And the person is tapping this switch on the app, their credit card's there, and then it's gone. And then it's there, and then it's gone. That is not the Holy Spirit.

We would not realize that we need to confess our sins if we did not have the convicting ministry of the Spirit. He is the one who reminds us that we are out of line. That is his job.

He convicts the world, which includes us of sin and righteousness and judgment. For the unbelievers, this is the great white throne judgment. This is where do we stand with regard to a Holy God looking at who he can take into the eternal future.

For us, we need conviction of sin and righteousness. What do we need to lay aside and how can we lay hold of righteousness? There's some things we want to offload, other things we want to import. Anybody that's ever moved from one place to another, anybody that's ever said, I've got to declutter.

What am I going to keep? What am I going to get rid of? I want to keep the good stuff. I want to get rid of that, which slows me down. So having laid aside filthiness, this you could translate as dirtiness.

The gloss in a lot of interlinear Bibles is having laid aside dirtiness. This is what defiles or soils or makes it impossible to optimize what you're doing. We clean our glasses.

We Windex a mirror. We squeegee our windshield. We've got to remove the dirt.

If we're going to do anything social, we want to take a shower. We want to remove the filthiness, get rid of the dirt. Can't do anything in this weather.

If you've been outside working and you're sweaty and you're covered in grass clippings and dirt and whatever else has come from your efforts, before you do anything, I have got to get in and wash this stuff off. That's got to come first. Same thing here in the spiritual realm.

Therefore, because God has birthed us by the word of truth so that we can be a first fruits, we can be an example. Having laid aside the dirt, the filth, the defilement, the corruption, that which clings to us from the world. Jesus washed the disciples' feet, road dust that they accumulated coming to the upper room the night before he was crucified.

Jesus washed their feet and he said, essentially, this is a metaphor. What I have done for you, you do for one another. We first have to have our own filthiness removed.

We can't do it ourselves. It isn't a matter of making a promise or a resolution. I'm never going to do that again, I promise.

We don't have the power to keep that promise. We don't have the power to cleanse ourselves. God has to do it.

We have to know how to avail ourselves of that grace. We know how to do this. This is basics of the Christian faith.

Confess your sins, be washed. The washing of water by the word, it isn't just a matter of confession. It is also walking in the light.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path. And when you think about confession of sin and you say, well, Psalm 51, 1 John 1.9. Don't forget 1 John 1.7. If we keep on walking in the light where God keeps on being in the light, we have fellowship. Fellowship doesn't come with confession.

Fellowship comes with walking in the light. And the light is God's word. The light is the word of truth.

We are the body of Christ and we need to act like it. This gets back to where we're going in verse 22 here. Be a doer.

How are you a doer? We actually have the instructions on doing it before he gives the exhortation. Having laid aside the filthiness, get out of those bad patterns, confess it, walk away from it. And the other thing we have to lay aside is what is translated here, the overflow of wickedness.

This is the spillover. You think about Psalm 23, my cup runs over, the goodness and mercy of God, the blessing. That is what ought to be spilling over in our lives, not the effect and the overflow and the spilling out of wickedness.

We have a fallen nature and we will have until the rapture. Don't let the thing leak out. We've got to separate that.

When you spill something in the kitchen, you clean it up. You spill something in some other room of the house, you've got to eradicate that. You don't want that being tracked around.

You don't want it defiling and polluting other things and other activities. It is a super abundance. It's an overflow of wickedness.

So how important is this? It's got to come first. There's got to be a clean space. You see doctors coming in and scrubbing up.

And when they walk into the operating room, they back through the door and they've got their hands up in the air so that nothing that might have spilled over or contaminated or defiled any surface touches them. Before they can do an operation that will be beneficial and non-infectious, they've got to remove any defilement, any dirtiness and anything where someone sneezed, someone brushed a countertop or a surface with some biological waste they were headed to the trash with. You have to get rid of that.

And they are two different things. Dirtiness that we know of and whatever overflowed or spilled or splashed or came out in a mist or a sneeze or a cough, all of that, known or unknown. Confess your sins.

He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Same idea here, two different things. The overflow, this can be coming from other people.

This can be coming from other places. This can be too much exposure to social media or too much attention to the news. And the wickedness spills over and splashes us or contaminates us or deflects and distracts us.

My personal dirtiness, I've got firsthand knowledge of. I've got to lay that aside. Whatever wickedness is flowing in and contaminating me from the outside, I've got to get rid of that as well.

Interior or exterior sources. Then I can receive with humility, humility. Step one, eliminate dirtiness, that's personal sin.

Eliminate the effect of the overflow of wickedness from other places. That's step one. What's going on in my thinking that is either my own fault, my own sin, my own failure.

What am I absorbing from the environment that is deflecting and depressing and dissuading me, keeping me from being effective before the Lord? A workman that does not need to be ashamed. It can be coming from the outside. I may not have any personal sin I need to confess, but I'm still got my thinking corrupted by what's going on in the world.

Set that aside, apotiphy, grab it and separate it. Has to come first. Think about this afternoon, think about tomorrow.

What's gonna be going on? Well, whatever it is, the first thing I've got to do is be sure that I'm not bringing my own personal sin into it, nor am I bringing in corrupting influences from the outside. The advice of the world, trying to treat as doctrine the traditions of men. What people say would be the right thing.

What people think is the best thing. What the opinion of others might bring to the table. Well, I wanna be a man pleaser.

James is getting close to introducing that topic of being a respecter of persons. That's a corrupting influence. That's an overflow of wickedness from the outside.

Then we can receive with humility. So am I feeling particularly self-sufficient and capable? And I've been doing this a long time. I know the word of God and I know what's right and wrong.

And the speaking the truth in love and the bringing songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts together to the Lord, to spur one another on to love and good works. The benefits of fellowship with fellow believers, which I should not forsake. Don't forsake contact with fellow believers, the assembling of yourselves together.

If I know believers and I have the chance to speak with them, to fellowship with them, and I know that they are in the same mindset of pursuing the narrow road and the straight gate, representing the Lord Jesus Christ as his body, understanding the importance of faithfulness, of the Holy Spirit, of the word of God. If I know believers like that, don't let time go by for very long without fellowship. It's a wonderful benefit we have that even though we are scattered, we can get together and benefit as we pray for each other, as we encourage each other to love and good works.

This is humility, recognizing that I'm not a lone ranger, I'm not the lone wolf boy scout. I can't just sit there and the book chariot is rising and I'm getting better and better all by myself. I need contact, I need fellowship.

We are a body and we are edified by that which every joint supplies, every part of the body is important and it is fitted together by God. There are parts of the body that are adjacent and they benefit each other, they support each other, they strengthen each other. The movement of

the body takes place because the parts are working together.

Cannot overemphasize the importance of Christian fellowship. We could have all been individual believers, you know, little particles floating around and have a copy of the word of God and the Holy Spirit comes to us. Why is it we are a body with many parts and they look different and they function different and they have a different relationship to the head, different distance from the head, different function relative to serving the purposes that the whole body is designed for.

Christian fellowship is essential. Don't let it slip. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.

Speak the truth in love. Let the gifts that God has given other believers bless, edify. That requires humility.

To subordinate ourselves not to what we feel is right, what we instinctively want to have happen, it takes humility to recognize that the word of God is our authority because the word of truth is Jesus Christ. The head of every man is Christ, right? You go to Ephesians. And to recognize the authority of the word of God that filters down through various other channels, but it is sourced in God the Father, it is expressed bodily in the Lord Jesus Christ and the head of every man is Christ.

You want to talk about wives and husbands, you have some structure, some organization. Same thing in a nation. Obey those that have the rule over you, whether it's in a church, in a nation, pray for the king, fear God, honor the king.

That's, they don't rule except by God's allowance. So this is humility. It says receive with meekness.

You say, oh, well, I'll hang my head and kick my toe in the dirt. What is humility? Humility is an expression of self-control and a reminder that I'm not self-sufficient. I don't have the strength within me.

I need what God provides me. The good giving and the perfect gifts that God provides, I need those. Without those, I am hopeless, helpless, and useless.

So I, first of all, got to get the wickedness and the personal sin out of the way, out of the picture. Then with humility. Number two is establish a proper point of view, an objective point of view, which the Lord Jesus said, without me, you can do nothing.

With God, all things are possible. Recognizing that, acknowledging it, and implementing it in my life. I need that which every joint supplies.

I need the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I need the power that comes from the word of truth. Without that, I am nothing.

That's humility. Clear the decks, establish a proper point of view. Objective thinking is humble thinking.

I'm not all that and a box of cookies. I need what God provides in grace. Now I can, number three, receive the implanted word.

You know that the author heard the parable of the sower and the seed. We've examined that at length in previous sessions. The implanted word, it can't be on the surface where the birds pick it and carry it away.

It can't be in shallow soil, springs up, and it looks like, oh, I love that. That was a great piece of truth from the word of God. It just really excites me and stimulates me.

And oh boy, it wasn't that great. But when trial comes that James has been talking about in chapter one, it's no longer there. The sun rises, the heat hits, and it withers up, and it is as though the seed was never there.

The soil is too shallow. It needs to be implanted. I've got to review it.

I've got to think about it. I've got to pray over it. I've got to try to figure out how does this make a difference in what I'm doing right now and what I'm going to be doing in the near future.

These are headlights. I'm driving 65 miles an hour in the dark. This is the light on my path.

I've got to take it on board, and I've got to act based on what it reveals. You want to be on low beams? You want to be on high beams? To what extent do I value this truth and let it be the lamp to my feet and the light to my path? I'm going to hide it in my heart so I don't sin and have to start over in this set of steps. Implanted word, if it sinks into the soil, if it germinates, if it establishes deep roots, if it starts to define the soil, you don't look over a growing crop field.

You drive around this time of year and later, and you see people who have planted corn or barley or other crops, and you don't look and say, well, there's a big patch of dirt. What do you say? There's a wheat field. There's a hay field.

There's a barley field. Or some other, it's defined by what's growing out of it. Look at that garden.

They've got all kinds of things growing out there. I can recognize the tops of the carrots, and I see the tomato plants, and I see the okra, and I see the snap beans. I see these fruits.

I don't say, well, there's a big patch of dirt. I say, there is a garden. There is a field that is defined by what grows out of it, and the implanted word will cause us to no longer be dirt.

Some people say a man is made out of mud, made out of dirt. Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return. That's earthly life, human life, uninspired life, no Holy Spirit present.

The implanted word, that is what is able to deliver our souls. Save is delivered. Sozo most of the time should be translated, delivered.

The implanted word delivers our soul. Paul talks about being delivered out of this present evil age. Deliverance, deliverance from our nature.

Strength when we are tried, when we are tested, when life throws various trials at us. Isn't this what we want in a day? I don't want to have a false measure of success and say, well, that went really well. I'm feeling good about those outcomes.

My efforts bore fruit in the physical realm. People are applauding. So many movies, you know, there's the obligatory applause scene at the end as though, well, it all turned out okay.

People are clapping. That gets on my last nerve. I will turn off a movie when they get to the obligatory applause scene, if I can, because it's just so annoying, really, that people are, this is the Hollywood standard.

If people are clapping, I did a good job. And they bring it to these other stories they tell. No, human applause is not the goal.

The implanted word delivers us. The fruit is in what it accomplishes. It doesn't glorify us.

It doesn't satisfy us. It doesn't give us a cause for boasting. We, in humility, recognize I've been delivered from a terrible outcome, from an awful fate, from bondage, from enslavement.

I've been delivered because I made choices that let the word sink into my soul and germinate. It is the word that grows. It is the word that is bearing fruit.

It's the grace of God that brings water on the field. Remember in Hebrews, the rain comes. What does the field produce? If it produces thorns, the field is going to be burned.

The dirt might be the same, but what does the dirt produce? Is it a thorn and thistle field or is it a wheat field? 30, 60, 100 fold. So important. So having laid aside our personal sin, the dirt, having laid aside the overflow and superabundance of wickedness that comes from the outside, having established humility, I need this.

I recognize it's important. I'm not sufficient in and of myself. I receive the word.

Notice God's providing the word. God is providing the word. I receive it and it delivers my soul.

I don't deliver myself. God, through his word, delivers us. But verse 22, our passage, be a doer of the word.

It's been implanted. It is growing by their fruits, ye shall know them. So what's our fruit? We know the fruit of the spirit.

We know that a fresh water fountain doesn't produce salt water and so on. We're going to get

to that a little bit later in James. He cycles through these themes.

He's going to return to testing. He's going to return to wisdom and what its characteristics are. He returns to the genuineness of our faith, that what true religion is.

And as he does this reinforcement and revisiting of themes, we will see these things coming up. If we hear it and we think the hearing is sufficient. I used to go to churches that were wonderful teaching churches.

But when you left, and most of them weren't, you know, big traditional churches with a lot of the accouterments. And so there'd be folding chairs and people would have their seat, their chair where they would sit. And if you were one of the last ones to leave, you would look around and here's a Bible and a notebook sitting on the chair.

And well, it's more convenient to just come and try to lug that thing back and forth all the time. I just leave it on the chair. And how does that support and encourage all of the hours and days when you're not sitting there hearing? I'm a hearer of the word.

And when I'm hearing, I've got my notes, I got my Bible. I've marked the thing up. My pages are fluffing because I flipped through them so much at church.

Instead of taking it home and saying, this is gold. I need to review this. I need to pray it.

I need to live it. I need to examine myself and make sure I am humble and free of sin and receiving it and having it be implanted, not just a hearer. Be doers and not hearers only, because when you do that, you fool yourself.

When it says deceiving, put fooling. You're fooling yourself. If you think listening to good teaching is it.

I gave this example last week and it still has traction in my mind. You buy a guitar book, they show you the fingering. You can watch a video.

The guy will play through it and say, here's the tutorial. Here's how to play this song. Notice you go up to the fifth fret and you do this.

And you watch it, you hear it. You think, oh man, that sounds just like the record. That sounds just like the recording.

If you don't do it, you are not playing that song and you fool yourself. Look at my shelf full of guitar books. Look at how many videos I've watched.

Doesn't make you a guitar player. Trust me, I know this. Or a piano player.

You've got to practice. You have to do it yourself. And you have to realize that when I sit down and try to make up an arrangement or play this song by myself, it's completely inadequate.

It sounds awful. I need to discipline myself to follow the instruction, to read the music and play it the way it was written if I want to produce that particular outcome. You fool yourself if you think buying a book is gonna make you good at anything.

Fooling yourselves. If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man looking in the mirror, observing his natural face. He observes himself.

But as soon as he quits looking at the mirror, it's as though he never looked. He immediately forgets what kind of person he is. And you notice that this metaphor is kind of vacillating.

When we look in a mirror, we typically see the superficialities, right? We see, oh, I got spinach in my teeth, or I've got a black eye, I need to cover that up with some makeup or whatever. So if you're a hearer and not a doer, you hear, and he switches from hearing to sight. This is like looking at something, but as soon as you walk away, you can't see it anymore.

And it is looking at yourself because the word of truth is for us. It doesn't say you look at somebody else and as soon as they leave, you can't remember what they look like. Couldn't that have been an analogy, a metaphor? He says, you look in the mirror at yourself, but as soon as you quit looking at the mirror, looking hasn't done you any good.

You don't think, continue to think, I need to lose weight and here's how I'm gonna do it, or I've got a problem with my appearance, I need a haircut, I need different clothing, I'm wearing two different kinds of plaid or whatever it might be. You look and it is a diagnostic. It is a way to improve what you see.

But James says, he observes himself in verse 24, goes away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. The mirror reveals what kind of person we are. That's what the word of God does.

A mirror doesn't always, you can see somebody who's beautiful can look in the mirror and see their beauty reflected back at them, but they may be ugly on the inside and the mirror doesn't show it. But James is anticipating his comparison here, that the word of truth is a mirror for our soul. You forget what kind of man you are, but he who looks in verse 25 into the perfect law of liberty.

We'll see this next time, but notice it doesn't say the perfect law of Moses, does it? This law of liberty is a pure direct synonym to the word of truth. And the word of truth is a pure direct synonym for the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ came to reveal. I mentioned this again in recent weeks.

What did Jesus say to Pilate? For this reason I was born, for this cause I came into the world. You remember what it was? To bear witness to the truth. This is why I came.

John got that. John was inside the building and heard these things. That's why we have so much of this information in the gospels is John was an ear witness to the trials.

And what Jesus said with questions he was asked, the dialogues with Pilate, what went on when he was before the Sanhedrin and the chief priests and so on. John heard these things. John says, he is the word.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. He who looks into the perfect law of liberty. Jesus said, here's the law.

You have heard it said, here's what I say. And James heard this. James understood it.

We look into the perfect law of liberty. This is the truth that Jesus Christ taught. This is the truth that the apostles were commanded to teach.

You look at that perfect truth. It is mature, it's complete. The word perfect means it's come to maturation.

It's complete. There's nothing missing. The old Testament law was limited.

It was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, Paul says. The perfect law that brings freedom. This is the perfect law of freedom.

We're no longer under the yoke and bondage of the law, nor are we under the yoke and bondage and slavery to our fallen nature. We can lay aside dirtiness and the overflow of wickedness. Because Jesus Christ has come.

And we can now look at this complete truth. When that which is perfect is come, Paul said, that which is in part will be done away. And he was talking about New Testament truth completes the shadows of the law.

The shadows have been done away. We don't do ritual sacrifices. We don't have to observe the feasts.

We don't have to put tassels on our clothing and not shave the corners of our beards and so on. Even the dietary laws that were symbolic have been done away. It was partial.

It was an anticipation. The perfect, complete law of God, the perfect word. And he uses law intentionally because who's he talking to? The 12 tribes.

The law of Moses is partial. Now we have the perfect law. And in it, we have freedom.

We're no longer under bondage to rituals and anticipations. It's the perfect law of liberty. That is what we look at.

And we continue in it. What a privilege. What an opportunity.

Especially for us as Gentiles. Centuries and generations hence. We continue in it.

And we are not a forgetful hearer. But a doer of the work. Notice, a doer of the work in verse

25.

A workman that does not need to be ashamed. A doer. It comes out as we think, as we speak, and as we act.

What an opportunity. What a clear presentation of how we can redeem the time because the days are evil. We set aside the overflow of evil and we redeem the time as good stewards, as faithful workmen.

No need to be ashamed. I redeemed the heck out of this day. I was thinking.

I confessed my sins. I considered what the word of God shows me about myself so that I can overcome by God's grace and in God's power, whatever limitations and shortcomings and the fallenness of my flesh. And my work counts.

My work reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus, redeems and justifies and vindicates His work on my behalf. The in hymns of Ephesians chapter one are all available to me and I'm exploiting them. I'm reflecting God's glory day by day, minute by minute.

This is why we're here. Human accomplishments and the satisfactions might come. Any unbeliever can do that.

What separates us and makes us distinct? This viewpoint, this opportunity, this potential. And it's not hard. We understand it.

And we just establish that attitude of humility. In humility, I've got to offload what's detrimental. I've got to inload and implant that which enables and empowers me, guides me, shines a light on my path.

And now I, as a doer of the work, notice how it finishes. He will be blessed in what he does. Oh man, blessed in what we do.

Who doesn't want that? We've just been given perfectly clear and easy steps for every day to count now and in the ages to come. What's not to like, what's not to go to God in prayer and thankfulness and say, Lord God in heaven, thank you for the Lord Jesus, the word of truth, who has made this deliverance, this salvation from fallenness and temporary ephemeral vapor that disappears life. It all counts.

It's meaningful now and in eternity. Thank you, Lord. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we are so thankful that you have granted this grace and made these resources and provisions and examples, exhortations, the very word of truth available to us, even at a distance of time, even at a distance geographically through your word, through the presence and power of your spirit. We have this saving power available to us, redeeming power, opportunities that bless us now and in the ages to come. We pray that as we reflect on them, God, the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts in an effective and meaningful way so that we can fulfill your

purpose in birthing us through the word of truth.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.