

James 26-08-19a

Greetings fellow pilgrims, members of Grace and Truth Bible Church, all of those who love the Lord Jesus and love the Word of God. We are here on this Wednesday evening. It is the 19th of August, 2026.

We are continuing our study in the book of James or Jacob as it was more properly called. We're picking up at verse 22, being hearers of the Word and not failing to do anything about it, failing to do something about it. We want to be not only hearers of the Word, but doers as well.

There are some fascinating clues and helpful truths in this passage that are buried behind the English translation. We're going to look at those. It's not going to be a technical Greek class, but it is going to illuminate for us exactly what the message is that has been so carefully constructed and woven together from the very beginning of this chapter.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin. Father, it is such a wonderful comfort to know that our lives are not lived in our own strength. It is not by might nor by power, but by your Spirit.

And we know that the means by which your Spirit energizes and guides and motivates us is through your Word. This is what we look at tonight. We ask your blessing on us as we do so.

May each of us find in this passage a strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, who led the way and set the example of how to live the Spirit-filled, Spirit-guided, Spirit-enabled life through the respect, the intake, and the application of your Word. We pray that in all things our Savior, the Lord Jesus, will be glorified as we endeavor to represent Him on this earth in the time that remains to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Reading our passage, I am tempted to go back to the beginning, but you can do that for yourself. I'm going to pick up in verse 19.

So then, looking at every good and perfect gift that comes down from the Father, we saw that last time, verse 17, that is a marker for a concept that we have covered in detail, but you want to remember the word perfect there is *telos*. It means something that has come to its proper end, a process that is complete, something that has matured, developed, reached the place of function after that development. So this is a mature gift, a gift that can be used by the mature in a mature way for God's ends, God's purposes.

This is the gift. What is the gift? What did we ask for back in verse 5? If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives generously, liberally, and without reproach. And these good giving occasions and these complete gifts come down from the Father of lights.

No accident that of the many appellations for God the Father, this one is chosen because it speaks of what He has provided for us in terms of guidance. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, all the way back to Genesis. And we're going to be seeing that return to the very beginning pages of the law as we proceed tonight.

So remember that from the preceding context. So then, verse 19, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

And our goal is to produce the righteousness of God. It's easy to forget, isn't it? We wake up in the morning, we get to do some hygiene, pull on some clothes. A lot of people eat a breakfast and then off into the schedule, off to complete tasks and responsibilities and enter into whatever the challenges and opportunities are for the day.

And it would be so helpful if we could remember like Daniel did, evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud. Daniel prayed three times a day in accordance with that Psalm, which I am sure he knew. Pray and cry aloud, set the stage, get some context for the battles I face and the challenges I navigate and the opportunities and the setbacks and the drag of my own nature and the problems with people and with the world and all of the distractions that are thrown at us to make us forget who we are and why we're here.

I say again, all of these circumstances, what is on the news, what is coming across the phone, what is hitting you with email and texts and a boss or a teacher or a spouse or relationships of any sort, we can easily get immersed and forget the objective. What is the objective? Pop quiz, one and only one question. What is the objective for today? What will the objective be for tomorrow? Producing the righteousness of God, laying hold of the righteousness of God.

There is no higher purpose. What is higher than that? Reflecting, representing, actualizing, performing, producing, laying hold of and becoming immersed in the righteousness of God. We are not here for any more important purpose than that.

We have a lot of purposes, we have a lot of opportunities, responsibilities, but in all of them, what emerges, what is produced should be the righteousness of God. So quiz question number two, what is one easy way to not produce the righteousness of God? What is the quickest way to fail the number one mission objective? We just read it. Anger, the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

So what is something that we should watch for, flee, tamp down, pour water on when it flares up? I've had personal experiences with this just this past week. It comes out of nowhere. It tackles me from behind.

And I think, wait a minute, I was just in James. And what did God say? This anger is keeping me from accomplishing the objective. I got to get me a big bucket of living water and douse that fire.

And what a release and what a happiness it is to be released from the power of sin by the word of God, God's gift of wisdom. When our besetting sins beset us, it is the word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit and our desire to lay hold of God's righteousness. This is the objective.

We need to remind ourselves. We ought to set a beep on our little phone or watch or whatever. Every time that thing goes off, am I doing the righteousness of God? Am I thinking about the righteousness of God? What about this conversation? What about this attitude? What about this effort? What about this set of priorities I'm observing? What about this distraction I'm giving prey to? Oh, I was trying to read my email and I clicked something and that led to something, which led to something, which led to something.

Oh, look at the time. I've been following this trail of chain-smoked links for the last hour and a half. Is that a good stewardship of my time? Is that redeeming the time because the days are evil? Or have I just been neutralized and taken out of the battle for stimulation, mental bubble gum? You chew it and chew it, but there's no nutritional value.

You don't accomplish anything. It just kills time. There's a great song lyric I won't inflict on you about this town and nothing's moving except the laundry on the line and a dog who bites just to kill the time.

He's not really trying to kill what he's biting. He's just killing time. It's useless, pointless, and in some ways destructive.

So the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God, which is everything. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ died to give us, to enable us to lay hold of, produce, reflect, accomplish the righteousness of God. So anger is right out.

You've got to be watchful because that thing will sneak through the security, will infiltrate the camp, waylay us, and neutralize us, take us out of the battle. Therefore, verse 21, lay aside filthiness and the overflow of wickedness. Notice he moves from anger, which he has mentioned in each of the preceding two verses.

Anger. So he doesn't say lay aside anger. He says lay aside filthiness and the overflow of wickedness.

This is what can make us angry. It can be filth and overflow in our own lives, or we can be looking at the filth and overflow of wickedness elsewhere. And instead of figuring out how to be light, shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, we join in.

It's like this infection that takes place in mob violence, where a few people start smashing windows and looting, and other people say, well, everybody else is doing it. And first thing you know, people that are normally not criminal have become criminals by association and by example and by being drawn in. And anger can be infectious.

One person gets angry. The other person says, well, I'll fight fire with fire. I'll be angry right back.

And instead of iron sharpening iron, you have anger and flaming anger. So when he says lay aside filthiness and overflow of wickedness, one of the things this does is by getting those out of the picture, the tinder that is set on fire by anger is removed. The cause of our anger in many cases is laid aside.

Don't spend too much time looking at the news and shaking our fist and throwing a shoe at the TV set as it were. How dare they look at these socialists taking over everything. Look at these people that are completely off the rails and out of touch and don't know history.

And what happened to their education? What's the matter with their parents? And first thing you know, you're off and running in the, in the anger sweepstakes lay it aside from our first and second Peter study disinvest. I want to be more invested in my spiritual identity and the upcoming kingdom of the father. Then I am in the ways of the world.

What we see around us, the forms of this world are passing away. We don't want to pass away with it. We don't want our inheritance and our future opportunities to pass away with it.

So lay aside, you can observe it. You can note it. You can parse it.

You can spend some time understanding its causes and conditions and successions and relations, its origins, its outcomes, its roots, its fruits, but don't get angry. Anger is our enemy and it is related and linked to many other mental attitude sins. Wrath of man is not produced righteousness.

So you got to lay these things aside and instead do what so helpful. If you're trying to break a bad habit or get away from, from a bad course is set a new course, have an alternative. You can't just sit there resisting, resisting, resisting.

You're looking at the source of temptation. This is the alcoholic who goes to the bar, sits on a stool, orders a glass of whiskey. And as they were both hands on the bar, staring at it saying, I'm not going to drink it.

I'm not going to drink it. I'm an alcoholic. One drink will be the end of me.

But you've gone to the place where it is. You've ordered it. You're sitting there and now you're trying to resist it.

This is the opposite of the Barney Fife approach, which is nip it in the bud at the first sign of an exit off the narrow road to the straight gate. Stop there. Don't route your path past the bar.

Don't decide you'll just go in for a moment for old Lang's. I don't sit on the stool, don't order the drink, and then don't sit there trying to resist it. Have an alternative.

I will take a different path. So laying these things aside, instead receive with humility, the implanted word. We're going to be coming back to this implanted.

It's very important, but notice it's not seed that is sitting on the hard packed soil. It's implanted. Humility allows us to let it sink in.

Humility allows the fire and the hammer of God's word to do its work. Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces. My head is often a very solid rock and it needs to be smashed.

And I need to sit still in humility and let the word of God convict, rebuke, and instruct me in righteousness. Takes humility. The key to many step programs is at the beginning.

Admit there is a problem. It takes humility to acknowledge I'm wrong. I have been wrong.

I am wrong. I am doing wrong. I am thinking wrong, and I do not have the power to unwrong myself.

The word of God is alive and powerful. Let me receive with humility the word of God and let it get planted. Let it sit there long enough, nurture it, water it so that it will germinate and grow and replace anger, replace distraction, replace self-interest, replace self-gratification.

I have got to receive with humility the implanted word. And as mentioned last time, it is extremely difficult for genuine humility and anger to exist in the same soul. If we cultivate humility, recognizing what do we have that we did not receive? We have been crucified with Christ.

It is not we who live for ourselves, but Christ who lives in us now, according to Paul. We are here to represent Him. This is an objective, outward-looking, selfless attitude toward life.

I am not here to get mine. You will get what I have got when you pry my cold, dead finger off the trigger. I have been thinking a lot about this because many of us are great Second Amendment fans.

However, you do not find that example in the Bible. Paul says you accepted the loss of all things for the sake of Christ. He does not say good on you for hoarding spears and swords.

And when they came to get your stuff, you slew as many of them as you could before you were taken and incarcerated and fed to the lions. It is not the biblical model. Joseph did not kill his captors and try to escape when he was sold into slavery in Egypt.

He did not assassinate Potiphar in his sleep and try to make his way back north to his father. Daniel and his three friends did not make every effort to escape and go back to Jerusalem from Babylon. Jeremiah is a letter to all of the southern kingdom of Judah telling them, it is God's will that you be led into captivity.

Do not resist it. Do not go to Egypt and try to recruit allies and try to fight this thing. This is God's will.

So the key is knowing what God's will is, and we need the humility and the objectivity to understand that good and acceptable and perfect will. We do that by receiving with humility the implanted word. You all wouldn't be here.

We would not all be here if we weren't interested in the word of God, if we didn't want to hear it. We want to be sure that we are also as interested in living in its light and making that a priority. I've got to think about it during the day.

I've got to consciously remember this whole life, all of these experiences, these opportunities, the passing of the minute hand around the dial as hour by hour passes in the day. I am here to lay hold of righteousness by faith. I can do it sitting still in a chair.

I don't have to be engaged in any activity. It is the battle of the mind. Am I going to trust in God? Am I going to cultivate and nurture the implanted word? Or am I going to let my thoughts run and let them go bad? We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age.

James says, lay aside that darkness, lay aside the filthiness, the corruption, the dirt, and the overflow of wickedness. That's God's battle. God will handle things on the global stage.

I can't make a difference in that anyway. I can be a source of light, a source of hope, so that someone will ask me a reason for it. The implanted word, it is able to save your souls.

I thought I was already saved, excepted the Lord Jesus long years ago. Daily deliverance. This is what we need.

You can't lay hold of righteousness. You can't produce righteousness while sin is having its way, while wickedness is dominating and distracting and deflecting us. Our souls need deliverance, and there is only one way.

It's not by might. It's not by willpower. I'm not just going to bravely do it in my own strength.

It's the Spirit and the Word. How many times have we reviewed this principle? The power of God comes into the life of the believer by the Spirit of God and the Word of God. They are both divine.

They are supernatural. They are able to quench and conquer every type of darkness, every brand of sin, every source of wickedness, even my own fallen nature. If I turn my attention, if I cultivate the presence and power of God's Spirit and the implanted Word, greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me, delivers my soul. This is the clearest

scripture. You can't find scripture more clear on how we as believers should approach our day and each hour in that day.

Why am I here? What is my purpose? Have I accomplished my purpose if I get my job done and draw a check? Have I accomplished my purpose if I start the day with an unmowed lawn and unwashed clothes, and I end the day with a clean laundry? Was that my purpose? These are intermediate objectives, but my goal is to do those things in a way that pleases God and lays hold of righteousness. So, this is why in verse 22, be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. There is a lot of deception involved.

I've mentioned in the past, and I may be doing a disservice, but I have attended churches in the past, brick and mortar churches, where when you enter, people's Bibles and notebooks are sitting on the chair, which is their favorite place to sit. I want to be sure I hold my place so that when I am hearing the Word, I've got a great angle on the pastor's face and the screen behind him or whatever else. This is my favorite spot to sit.

So, my Bible and all of the notes that I took are sitting on this folding chair or this pew. And when I come back, because hearing is the deal, and it raises the question. I can't judge.

These people might have another Bible and a spare set of notes. It just seems emblematic of it's all about the hearing. I attend a great church and here's a guy that knows some Hebrew and Greek and gets behind the translation and shows some cool things and aids in understanding.

And the hearing is stimulating and saying, you know, I never knew that before. That's fascinating. And there's nothing wrong with that if that is a part of a mature process that leads to application.

Because I heard that cool stuff, because it makes sense to me in a new and profound way, guess what I'm going to do tomorrow? When that boogaboo of anger starts to swell up, I've got a fresh piece of the Word of God, something the Holy Spirit can use in a powerful way to defuse my anger, to let me lay it aside as filthiness and the overflow of wickedness. I am a different person. I am a more powerful spiritual soldier.

I am more effectively wielding the weapons, the sword of the Spirit. I am more effective at fending off the attack of the enemy, the fiery darts of Satan with my shield of faith. I walk better.

My feet shod with the gospel of peace. I've got the helmet of salvation. This is able to deliver my soul.

And my soul, we like to think it's in our heart. It's pretty much in our head. That's why we need the helmet.

Helmet of deliverance. Very same word that's used here. It's able to deliver.

This is from Soterios. Soter, Savior. Soterios, salvation, deliverance.

That's what we're here for. So be doers, not hearers only. Pat ourselves on the back.

I'm there every time the doors are open. Look at how many stacks of notebooks I've got. This may not apply to everyone, but some of us come from a background where, you know, the size and extent of your notebooks was sort of a badge of, you know, look how long I've been here and how fast I can write.

And it's nothing wrong with notes. If you go back and review the notes, if you think through them and say, how should I then live? If they're notes for notes sake, it's an artifice. And we can fool ourselves into thinking that hearing is being.

That's why James says, there's a danger here. If we have the humility to say, let me examine myself and make sure I'm not making this mistake. That's what counts.

Am I making this mistake? Let's hope not. Deceiving yourselves. Hardest deception to crack.

It's one thing, you know, we say fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me. I should be watching for deception by others. But when we're fooling ourselves, that is a really tough one to crack.

We can't see our own heart. Jeremiah 17, I quoted it last time. I quote it frequently because I think about it a lot.

Am I fooling myself? Am I going along thinking, well, it's going to be a great day when the Lord Jesus returns. And instead I'm going to be poor, miserable, blind, and naked. And I didn't know it.

Remember in revelation, the last letter, you say I'm rich and you do not know that you are poor and miserable and blind and naked. How can you be those things and not know it? Self-deception. What cracks self-deception? The word of God pierces to the dividing asunder, goes to the very center.

It lays bare the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And if those thoughts and intents are deceptive, the word of God will reveal it. This is why the word has to be implanted.

It's got to get down in there where it can do its work. If I hear it and agree with it, well, the demons hear and agree. You know, the demons believe in God.

They shake, but they don't argue with the truth. Has it transformed them? Were there repentant demons? We're not given any indication that there were. We should be humble enough to make change.

Remember when we reviewed all of the commands in Revelation at the beginning and the end of the book, it says, blessed is the one who hears these words and keeps them, does them, performs them. So we went through to see, well, what are these words? And over and over and

over again, the word is repent. Metanoeo, change your mind.

It's a command of God to change our mind. If we don't change our mind, what's the point? I need to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. Romans 12 to not conform to the world.

Got to lay that stuff aside. This is a powerful, condensed message that James gives us. Now, here's where we're going tonight.

Verse 23. Keeping in mind, self-deception is a problem. Giving into anger is a problem.

Thinking my anger is justified because, you know, look over there, that's wrong. Gotta lay that aside. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves for, verse 23, if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror.

Natural face. Why doesn't it say observing his face? Why does it say natural face? I could give you 50 guesses and a Greek dictionary and you would never guess the word that is used here translated natural. This is a word you know.

It's a word I've already mentioned tonight in the lesson. The word here in Greek is Genesis. It's his Genesis face.

It doesn't say natural. You know, the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, the sarcastic man, that's not it. It's the Genesis face.

He looks at his beginning face, his initial, his starting face. And they couldn't figure this out. They said, well, it must be his natural face, his physical, the face he was born with.

You can see some paraphrases. They say the face he was born with, which is close, but no cigar. So, what is the concept here of looking in a mirror and seeing your Genesis face? You can translate this natural and it works.

But of all of the word choices, the one that occurs here ties this concept to the context. Now, what is the context that helps us understand what a Genesis face is? Turn the page back if your Bible is organized like mine to verse 18. Of his own will, he birthed us.

He brought us forth. How? By the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits, a beginning of fruits conceptually. Genesis is not used there, but the concept is we have been born.

We are a new creation in Christ, right? And we're something new. We're a new creation. We're a first fruits.

So, if you look into the mirror and you see your first face, your beginning face, this has traditionally been understood that, well, when I look into scripture, I'm convicted of sin. I see my natural man, the carnal man, the sinful man. I go to the scripture and it convicts me of sin.

First of all, that's a possibility that you can find other places, but that's not the context here. As we move forward, this is going to make more and more sense. If you're hearing and not doing, you're like a man observing his Genesis face in a mirror.

What does the word of God call us to? What does James chapter one call us to? Lay aside wickedness, lay aside the overflow and the filthiness and act in accordance with the new nature, the new man. God has birthed us. When sin matures, when it is full grown, it brings forth death.

But the father of lights, you're going back to creation, has created us for a purpose. He brought us forth of his own will by the word of truth that we have just mentioned, receive the implanted word. That's the beginning of a new crop.

The implanted word, it's a beginning. And conceptually, we have been created by the word. We're something new, the first fruits and the implanted word should produce something new.

So you go look in the mirror and you see from the word of God, this is what I should be. This is what God created me to be. Here's my Genesis face.

Adam was created in Genesis, in the image of God. And given opportunities to serve and to reflect God's glory. So what is it James is talking about here when he says, you look in the mirror, what do you see? This shows us what we can be, what we ought to be, what God created us to be in terms of glory and image and function.

It's the Genesis face that we observe. But what happens? He observes himself. This is a real cool word in Greek, but I'm not going to post all on it.

He observes himself. This is a word that actually has as its root to know. It's kata noeo.

You look at this face and you realize something. You have a piece of knowledge when you look at it. Here's what I ought to be.

There's the face that God gave me at the beginning. This is why the word was implanted. This is why we are going to come to the fullness of fulfillment in God's plan.

But you see that face, observe myself, but I go away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. Of man is not there. It's not Andros, it's not Anthropolos.

There is no word for man. It just says he forgets of what sort, of what manner, of what kind he is. We are a new kind.

We are a new creation. We are a first fruits. It's not what kind of man.

Scratch it out. It's distracting. We are supposed to be a creation that God willed to make in the word of truth.

And if we see that in the mirror and walk away and forget it, we forget what sort we are, what special type we are. We're unique. People always want to say, oh, you're special.

We really are special in this sense. But if we forget that that's our identity, that that's our face, scripture shows us that. What an opportunity.

But we see it. We know something from it. Noah is right there in that verb.

It means I gain some knowledge as I look, but I walk away and forget the sort that I am. That I'm a new creation in Christ. That's what happens if I am a hearer, but not a doer.

Then we come to verse 25. What is the alternative? How can we avoid this tragic syndrome? That's what we're going to see when we come back from the break.