

James 26-08-19b

We resume our study here in this fascinating section of the book of Jacob, the book of James, chapter one, at verse 22, being a doer of the word, what does it mean? And we think you've got to obey the commandments and all of the thou shalt not's. And if I look into the law of liberty, I'm gonna see everything I'm doing wrong. The thrust of this, looking at the context, looking at the background of what God has birthed us and brought us into existence through his word, to be and to do is the goal.

We need to see that Genesis face and then live up to it. The new creation that we are in Christ, we should be something different. In a room full of people, we should be those who are distinct and are a first fruits representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the mundane events of life, doing the grocery shopping, filling the car with gas, getting things done, preparation, execution, aftermath, all of the normal chores of the day, opportunities of the day, even in our relaxation and our rest and recuperation, to be endeavoring to avoid anger, avoid distraction and to be righteous, to produce the righteousness of God. A successful day is a day where we have had the light of God's righteousness produced and shining forth in our lives. We are in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation.

We are to shine as lights in the world. It is the righteousness of God that is the glory of God. And we should be reflectors.

We should be those who are bringing it into situations. We are keeping our heads when all others are losing theirs. We are steady.

We are reliable. We are faithful. We are joyful, even in adversity, even in hardship, in times of suffering, pressure, difficulty, the supernatural power, it is not of us.

It doesn't glorify us. It is what God puts in us, the implanted word. And what grows from that word is the first fruits that God has designed us to exhibit and to represent.

So if anyone is a hearer of the word, verse 23, and not a doer, he's like a man observing his Genesis face in a mirror. He observes himself, but goes away. We can't spend all of our time in Bible class.

There was a time when I wished I could. I get a Saturday, got a little bit of free time, caught up on most things. Just listen to six or seven or eight Bible classes in a day.

Just spend the entire Saturday soaking in God's word. What an escape from pressure. What a wonderful oasis of living water to be refreshed and renewed and restored.

And there are periods of our lives where we can just go to that paradise of God and be transported into eternal realms and the presence of God. And it's a rare and precious thing to be

able to just bask in the light of God's word. And there aren't very many times in life where one can do that, but I've had a few of them and those are just top of the list days.

But we can't do that. We have to go away. So what happens when we go away? We come to Bible class, we look at the word, we see these wonderful truths.

We've seen them in the book of Revelation recently. We've seen them here in this book of James. And we think, wow, what an opportunity, what a provision, what a special status we enjoy in this age of the church where God has created us to be a kind of first fruits and given us this wonderful opportunity to produce his righteousness.

But we have to go away. What happens when we go away? Bible class ends, we turn things off, put the Bible back where we keep it, hopefully not on the chair at church, and we go about our lives. What happens? Do we remember or do we forget? There are only two choices.

We either remember our Genesis phase, our new creation in Christ identity is what this is really talking about. I am unique in the world as being in Christ. Ephesians 1, in him we are, in him we have, in him we become, in him we inherit.

What a fantastic opportunity. If you ever need a reminder of what it is to have the Genesis phase, read Ephesians 1. Christ the head, we his body. He is the head of all things to the church.

And we are in him, and in him we are elect. In him we have a destiny. In him we have inheritance.

In him we have opportunity. He has given us of the very spirit of God. He will come and dwell with us.

We saw this in John 14. To have his word and keep it is to enter into divine realms, to have a preview of the coming kingdom of the Father. Right here, right now, streets of gold, gates of pearl, tree of life, fruit of the tree of life, river of life, all of that, we have a preview of coming attractions, a foretaste of glory divine, as it says in the Blessed Assurance song.

We can have that now, if we pay attention. If when we go away, we do not forget. What happens when we forget? If we're a hearer, but not a doer, not a producer, like a man observing his Genesis phase in the mirror, his beginning phase, his new creation in Christ phase, this is who I am in Christ.

I've got to have the mirror of the word of God to see that phase. Anybody can see the natural man with natural eyes, right? Everybody can observe sin and fallenness and shortcoming and corruption and defilement. We don't need spiritual eyes to see that.

But to see the Genesis phase, to see the new creation in Christ phase, we have to look into God's word. It reveals to us glories divine, things that the carnal mind and the carnal man cannot comprehend, understand, perceive, or act on. Can't be transformed by the renewing of the mind

as a carnal man.

He observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets of what sort he is, of what kind he is. There's no word for man there. We are a new creation.

We are a new sort, a new kind, but you walk away and forget. But verse 25, this is the good stuff. This is what we've been working all evening to get to.

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty. Does that not just roll your socks down and knock your hat in the creek? What is he talking about? The perfect law of liberty? I thought Paul said by the law comes the knowledge of sin and the law is a schoolmaster and we're enslaved under the law. And when the law came, sin revived and I died.

And you read Romans six and seven and eight and the law is a millstone. It's written on tablets of stone and brings about death. And it's the spirit that gives life.

The letter of the law kills. What is James talking about here? You look into the perfect law of liberty. What scripture existed when he wrote this? Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

What is scripture? It's the Old Testament. It's the Pentateuch. That's the law.

But he says two things about the law. First of all, he says it is perfect. Oh my goodness.

It is perfect. What is the perfect law of liberty? Well, the word here is the same one that is used in talking about the word of God in Timothy. Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

All scripture is God breathed and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be telaios, complete, mature, perfect, telaios, rightly dividing the word of truth, telaios. We have seen it in James 1.4. Look back at verse four in our context. The testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Telaios, the perfect law makes us perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Coming to the standard of a mature man, a perfect man, telaios is often translated mature or complete. Perfect, in our language, tends to have sort of a moral component.

I never make a mistake, I never sin. This means mature, complete. I'm at the end of the growth process.

I am now in a functional capacity. I've got everything I need to do what I have to do, to do what I was fitted for, to accomplish the purpose for which I was created and brought here. So James 1.4, this is telaioi kaiolakleroi, perfect and complete work, so that we are complete and mature and lack nothing.

To be complete, there's no deficit, there's nothing missing. I'm not reaching for a skill that I don't have. So that's our initial context in verse four.

That's what perfect buys into. That's what it represents. It goes back to the perfection of God's work.

Patience, which is part of the fruit of the spirit, will bring us to maturity. In verse 15, we saw the antithesis of this. When lust has conceived, when epithumia, when unwarranted desire conceives, it gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is telaios, this is a verbal form, apo telaios theisa, but you can hear the telaios in there, the telos, apo is the prefix, which means from, telaios theia is what happens when you become complete in sin instead of in righteousness, and it produces death. Then in verse 17, the perfect gift of God, that perfect gift is telaios. It is a complete and perfect gift, and it's what we asked for back in verse five.

It is the wisdom of God is perfect. So the wisdom of God, the word of God, it makes perfect sense that this, which gives us patience and completes us, comes from the complete and perfect word of God. And it is the gift that is the opposite of the maturation of sin in our lives that produces death.

This is the perfect work and the perfect gift, the perfect word of God that produces patience, not anger. Notice this, it's almost a chiasmic structure here where we have needed patience. Let patience have its perfect work.

That makes us perfect. Anger prevents us from producing the righteousness of God. Is it patience or is it anger? Am I impatient and angry or have I laid aside filthiness? And the overflow of wickedness, and I am embracing and producing the righteousness of God.

So then when we come to verse 25, this is the law of God and this perfection, when it is implanted in us, springs up and produces maturity, completeness. I am fully equipped for every good work that the man of God may be telaios, fully equipped for every good work, rightly dividing the word of truth. That's why it is the perfect law.

Okay, that kind of makes sense, especially in the context. I look back and see these other uses of telaios and its forms in the preceding context. Such, I cannot tell you how beautifully woven together this first chapter of James is.

He lays the groundwork. He establishes the meaning of these concepts, what it is to come to maturity and to be perfect. And then he gets to the point here where he turns the corner into the second person, where he's now talking directly to you, to us.

And this is what we've got to do. We've got to be doers of the word and not hearers only. If we

see what we ought to be and we walk away and forget what we saw, we forget that we are a new creation.

We forget that in the daily tasks, the daily circumstances, the daily interactions that we have with circumstance and people, relationship, responsibilities, we have got to remember who we are. Remember that face that the word of God shows us. You are unique in your place.

You are uniquely positioned in relationships and in circumstances to lay hold of the righteousness of God and to produce it instead of the alternative, the operational death that sin produces in us when it is allowed to fester and to mature, when we let anger have its way with us, when we get distracted and deflected and we don't shine as lights. Anybody cannot shine as a light. We are something new.

Genesis, see that face and when we walk away, remember it. That's what is on the line here. So the alternative in verse 25, he who looks into the perfect law of liberty.

What does it mean a law of liberty? This is very integral to James' entire argument that we've seen in this chapter. So we've seen the idea of perfection. Look ahead to chapter two, verse 12.

This is not an accident. It's not just a one-off. We'll see verse 11.

He who said, do not commit adultery, said, do not murder. If you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you've become a transgressor of the law. Verse 12, so speak and so do as those who will be judged by what? We need to speak and we need to do.

Our conversation and our actions should be as those who will be judged by the law of liberty, the law of freedom. I thought the law constrained, I thought it set limits and restrictions, but James twice in the space of a few verses calls it the law of liberty. What does this mean? Well, look up a few verses at verse eight.

If you really fulfill the royal law, according to scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You do well. If you show partiality, you commit sin.

Boy, there is a lot going on in verses eight and nine. I can't wait to get there, but to get there, we have to finish this. And what is this? The law of liberty, of freedom.

We are free from the law of sin and death. God's word liberates us. This reminds me, I've used this illustration recently, but think about the regulations, the laws that say thou shalt not.

Don't covet, don't steal, don't murder, don't bear false witness, don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain. We have these thou shalt nots that are a distillation of much of the law. There are many things that are limits, but within those limits, there is great freedom.

You can go anywhere you want to in your car. It is a wonderful freedom. As long as you do not

break traffic laws and get stopped and fined or arrested or worse, incarcerated and held for trial because you run over a pedestrian, because you didn't pay attention to the signs that say, stop here.

Within the valid constraints of the law, there is great freedom. You can let your kids, when they are teenagers, go to their friend's house, go to parties, go to celebrations, go to events, go to concerts. And the more convinced you are that they will not violate the prohibitions, don't stay out too late, don't drink, don't take drugs, don't hang out with nefarious individuals that might be in your peer group somewhere.

When you trust them to keep within those lines, you can grant tremendous freedom. And that freedom is something to enjoy and to exploit and to make the most of. It is a law that is designed to grant freedom.

Stay within these lines and there's wonderful opportunity. If you can't be trusted with observation of the thou shalt nots, well, now there's got to be a much tighter leash. I gave the example of walking the dogs.

If they would respond to verbal commands and stop when you tell them to stop, they're about to go jump into a mud puddle, they're about to chase a baby bunny, they're about to run out into the road and potentially get hit. And if they are responsive and if they heed the commands to stay on the property, stay close to me, you don't need a leash. They are looking to accomplish the will of the master.

And when the master expresses his will, they're responsive and obedient. I can let them do all kinds of things. But when your pet is unpredictable, they will rush up and bite someone or they'll run out and chase cars and get hit in traffic.

They will get themselves dirty when you just washed and brushed them. They can hurt themselves going into places they shouldn't. Because they are unreliable in observing the law, I have to greatly restrict their freedom.

They've got to be on a leash. They've got to be held close so that they're not a danger to themselves and others. So this is the law of liberty.

God did not give us these rules to deny us happiness, to restrict us from a wonderful life. The law is there to give those things, to give us the freedom to be and to do in a way that gives us long lasting fruit of the spirit, love and joy and peace and patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control, self-control. I don't need these external constraints tightened up on me.

It's the perfect law of liberty. And especially in this age with the Holy Spirit there to be the voice that says, you need to stop here, this far and no farther. You're going to get hurt.

You're going to hurt someone else if you cross this line. And to be mindful, to be obedient, to be

faithful, to heed the word, to not forget what it says and forget who we are supposed to be in its light, in its reflection. So again, verse 25, he who looks into the perfect law of liberty, we're not looking at it to have it stop us short and constrain us.

We're looking for the places where we are free. I'm not violating the law if I endeavor to be a blessing to someone else, if I am sacrificial and beneficial, if I have an opportunity for my spiritual gift to function. It's not a burden.

I'm not being commanded. It's an opportunity that I embrace. I am positive.

I'm enthusiastic. I am motivated. And God grants blessing and enjoyment.

So it is a perfect law. There's nothing wrong with it. It's not something like Eve saw the commandment to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Well, it's a restriction. It's denying me the chance to be all I can be. She looked at the fruit and saw that it was desirable to make one wise.

Did God not make me wise enough? Can I not bask in the wisdom and opportunity he has already given me? The freedom to roam the garden and eat of every other tree? Oh no, this is a restriction. And I think this is an imperfect restriction. This is a bad law.

This is a wrong regulation. And it's limiting me. And so I will break it.

It is a perfect law of liberty. Concentrate on the freedom we have in Christ and not trying to push the boundaries as so many do around us today. So he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, continues, doesn't walk away and forget.

I look into it and I remember the Genesis phase. Here are my opportunities in Christ. What a thrill to be enabled and empowered and used by the Holy Spirit.

You can't get that at your local five and dime. Who has the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to be at work? This is the spirit that hovered over the faces of the water in Genesis 1-2. He can be present and active and produce the righteousness of God in me.

What an opportunity. Who doesn't want to do that? Why would I want to go break some rule and transgress some boundary somewhere when this unique opportunity is here? I see it in the word of God. Don't forget it.

Don't walk away and space it. Let's enter into tomorrow morning and the opportunities of that morning and that midday and that afternoon and that evening, mindful of what we are seeing tonight in the perfect law of liberty. Augmented now from what James had, we've got the entire New Testament that elaborates the Genesis phase and tells us who we are in Christ.

The beginning of new things, what it is to be firstfruits. That's what the Genesis phase is. So we look into the perfect law of liberty, recognizing I'm not perfect, but God's word is.

I am ready to, in my fallen nature, transgress, but there is freedom in Christ where I can go anywhere and do anything and it's laying hold of righteousness. Why wouldn't I do that? Not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work. Ho, ho, the doer of the work.

This reminds us of what the Lord Jesus said, when you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. John 13, 17, if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. To know them, you have to have heard them.

Remember the word that says to do things, to hear and to do, and the shift here from hearing to observing. Hearing the word gives us a visual picture. We hear the word, suddenly we are looking into the law of liberty and it is an enhancement.

It isn't just what we heard, we can see it. From hearing, we see, and from seeing, we do. We hear, we see, we remember, and we do.

So 13, 17 of the gospel of John, Jesus said, if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. And you can look at the context for these things. I was tempted to go into John 13, but we've done the gospel of John.

Look at that context and read it. What is he talking about? So, he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work. Once we see who we are in Christ, once we see the Genesis face and we don't forget, there is work involved.

We do the work that is required. The work is laying hold of righteousness by faith. Tamping down anger is work.

Maintaining a divine perspective and a biblical viewpoint as we negotiate the day is work. We have to struggle. Our warfare is against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age.

It is work to put on the armor of God. It is work to swing the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. It is work to wield the shield of faith and fend off the fiery darts of the wicked one.

It is work to keep your helmet of salvation on and be delivered thereby. This requires some effort. A doer of the work.

This one will be blessed in what he does. You have to wonder if James isn't thinking back to John 13, 17. If you know these things, you're blessed if you do them.

Verse 26, if anyone among you, and there's a question as to whether that is in the original text. I personally think if anyone thinks he is religious. I don't think it has to be among you.

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, here is a specimen of the work. Doing the work involves bridling the tongue. Now we're getting to specifics.

This is where our humility kicks in because we have to be willing to admit that maybe our tongue gets away from us. If anyone, notice the switch to the third person again. This is a hard truth.

And so James is, let's talk about these people over here who aren't bridling their tongue. We'll observe these people and then we'll shift our gaze back on ourselves. He who looks at the perfect law of liberty.

He who looks and forgets. These hard truths are couched in the third person so that we don't throw our defenses up and fail to apply them to ourselves. Let's look at the one who does this or the one who does that.

He does this but fails. He does this and remembers. That one is blessed.

We want to be a doer of the work. I want to be in that group that I'm observing in the third person. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, notice, but deceives his own heart.

Speaking out of turn, saying things we shouldn't, is self-deception. How many times have we seen deceiving ourselves in the preceding context? Do not deceive yourselves in verse 22. To be a doer of the word, you can't deceive yourself.

If you're deceiving yourself, guess how it's going to come out. You'll be speaking in ways you shouldn't. Does not bridle his tongue, deceives his own heart.

This one's religion is useless. You're a claim to Christ. You're a claim to being someone who imbibes the word of God, who hears it, who understands it, who digs into it deeply, mining the treasure.

You're deceiving yourself. We can hear and think we're doing well, and hearing is not the answer. And one of the symptoms, one of the ways we can know that we're fooling ourselves is our tongue gets away from us.

And many times we know this. As soon as we say something and in our mind, we hear this loud voice saying, words, come back. I shouldn't have said that.

Can I just rewind the tape and redo that? I spoke in haste. I spoke in anger. One of the things anger does is fuel the tongue.

And when you're angry, you say things you shouldn't. You say them in a way you shouldn't. You are intent upon wounding someone.

Something hurtful happens, something we take as hurtful, something we take as inconsiderate,

and we want to do an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And we wound with our words. If you can't bridle your tongue, if you can't stop that thing, you're in self-deception mode.

You should know better, but you're not thinking. You've walked away from the law of liberty and you forgot what's in it. Deceives his own heart.

This one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father. Notice, this is the judge.

When we get to 212, we're going to see being judged by the law of liberty. We know the law of liberty. We'll be judged by whether or not we remember it and keep it.

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this. Notice, it is completely outward looking. So many times in recent studies, we have seen that something is representative of an entire class of things.

The tribulational martyrs are representative of an entire class. The elders in Timothy and Titus are representative of an entire class, as are their wives. And here, this is a feature of pure and undefiled religion.

This isn't the sum total. This is a single representative element. Are you using the sharp sword of the tongue against others and fooling yourself into thinking that you've got pure and undefiled religion? Pure and undefiled religion is looking outward.

Here are needy people, orphans, widows, in their affliction, in their trouble. Here is someone else that's having a tough time and lack resources. An orphan is someone who lacks the normal provision of parental oversight and parental action, parental protection, parental provision.

An orphan doesn't have that. Here is someone in my periphery that has a need that is not met in the usual way. To look at that and see if there is a way to assist.

Pure, undefiled religion. What does religion stand for here? Not forgetting that I am a new creation in Christ. Not forgetting that I am a representative of God's light and God's glory.

I should be shining it forth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation that often overlooks those in need. And notice this is in one's near periphery. This is someone that you can visit, someone you can be first person present with.

This isn't abstract orphans off in some far off corner of the world. Not to say that contributing to charities that deal with that isn't a good thing. That's just not what James is talking about here.

What the Holy Spirit is convicting us about is needs right here where we can visit. We can be present. We can put a shoulder under that load.

We can contribute where there is an affliction. And notice it doesn't just say, well, they're poor,

give them some money. Or they're hungry, give them some food.

Although you can't help but think about the sheep and goats judgment. When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink.

When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was sick and in prison, you visited me. Different kinds of affliction that represents a circumstance beyond the individual's control.

I'm not responsible for this situation. I didn't create it, but here I am. People don't orphan themselves unless they are weird criminals like we see in our news, murder their own parents.

But orphans and widows are typically brought into that circumstances by forces that are well beyond their control. So when they are in trouble, and notice not every widow, not every orphan is in trouble, but when they are having trouble and they are in our near periphery, we can observe it, we can see that this is something that God has fitted us to address. Not every problem is our problem, but some are.

Not every widow is one we need to help, but some are. Not every orphan is someone we need to visit, but some are. And we prayerfully and intelligently, not forgetting what we see in the perfect law of liberty, we have the freedom to visit, to be present.

Visit doesn't mean I'm gonna go see them and sit down and have a cup of coffee. It means to be present. What is man that thou art mindful of him? In the Psalms, or the son of man, that you visit him, that you are present, that you come and make a difference, to visit.

Visit orphans and widows in their trouble and keep oneself unspotted from the world. This goes back to verse 21. Lay aside the dirt, lay aside the filth, lay aside the overflow of wickedness.

Don't be a part of it. Don't be corrupted or defiled by it. To the extent that we find it in ourselves, lay it aside.

To the extent that it occupies our mind because it's other's problem, lay it aside. Keep ourselves unspotted from the world. How do we know if we're spotted or not? We're back to the mirror.

Do I see when I look into the mirror what I ought to be or do I see problems? Am I forgetting because I don't want to remember what I'm supposed to be in this life? Am I too busy? This is the challenge. So, pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, this is what we want to measure ourselves by. The Father is evaluating and I will be judged, chapter two, verse 12, by this law of liberty.

I have freedom to leave behind dirt and wickedness. I have the freedom to remain unspotted in the world and instead to turn my efforts and my gaze outward. In what way can I shine a light? In what way can I be present and be helpful to those in my periphery? Widows and orphans are just representative.

They can be all kinds of people who suddenly have a need due to circumstances beyond their control. I am looking outward because I myself have already been prepared. I'm a new creation.

I've been birthed by the word of truth. I've been cleansed by the blood of Christ. And now I am fitted, useful to the master in every good work.

This is what we do not want to forget. We see it in the perfect law of liberty. And when we walk away, we don't forget.

How will we do tomorrow? Are we gonna remember what we saw tonight? Are we gonna live in its light? Can we bridle our tongue and instead look for ways we can be helpful? Or are we gonna get anger and other mental attitude sins and let them have their way? It's up to us. Well, what a motivating passage. How much insight do we gain understanding what the word of God reveals to us? It by way of opportunity, by way of representation of the Lord Jesus and through him, our heavenly father himself, everything that he's done for us, knowing that he's watching.

And our God and father, pure and undefiled religion in his sight is to be cleansed, to be fitted and to be looking for ways to express what God has done for us in our near periphery. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the wonderful truths that are contained here.

And we pray that God, the Holy Spirit will help us to retain them and to remember them as we walk away from our look into the mirror and back into life, that we will see those who are in need. And as those who have been equipped for every good work, we can practice pure and undefiled religion. We thank you for the Lord Jesus and the opportunities we have in him.

And we pray these things in his name, amen.