

James 26-09-13b

We pick up our study now in James via Hebrews, and we are looking at the means by which we can take this message to heart. We can hear it, we can agree with it, it can make sense to us, but how can we ensure that it really hits home, accomplishes God's purpose, for which he had James write it down. And this is the goal of looking at Hebrews chapter 10.

There are many other passages to which we could turn, but as was pointed out helpfully on the break, these are related not only by similar content, but also similar audience. Hebrews by its very name is addressed to Jewish believers, the Jews of the diaspora or diaspora, depending on how you want to pronounce it. And so there is appeal made to some Old Testament foundations.

There is the imagery of the tabernacle or the temple, the holy of holies and the presence of God and coming before him as those who are qualified to enter into the holy precincts. And in that regard, before we leave Hebrews, if you turn back a few pages to Hebrews chapter 4, we have a similar idea that was introduced a bit earlier. Hebrews 4.14, seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the son of God, then what? Let us hold fast our confession.

How important is it for us to remember who we are and why we're here? This takes us out of subjectivity. It is the confession of our hope founded on the faithfulness of God. It is the confession of our covenant relationship and familial relationship.

God is our heavenly father. The Lord Jesus Christ is our savior, the head of all things to the church. We are members of his body.

And to hold fast our confession is mentioned both places. In connection with the Lord Jesus as high priest, let us hold fast our confession for we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, with the pull of our nature, the press of circumstance, the failures of people around us, our own failures, which the Lord Jesus dealt with. You think of his words to Peter just before the arrest and the trials.

Satan has asked for you. We have the world, the flesh and the devil. We have that which is earthly, sensual and demonic coming after us.

Satan roams the earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But Jesus says what? I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail. And after you have turned, restore your brethren.

We are often able to empathize, to relate and to be forgiving, to be flexible, to be self-sacrificial because we ourselves are aware of our own failures. But we serve as priests, those who can represent ourselves before the Lord under our great high priest. He sympathizes with our weaknesses.

He was in all points tempted. It's the very same word that we had in James chapter one. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God.

The Lord Jesus knows what this is like. Without sin, verse 16. If you have not already memorized this, do so.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, the greater grace. Grace that is greater than our sin, greater than our circumstance, greater than what people can do. If God be for us, who can be against us? Why should I fear what man can do unto me? Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy. James says you fight and war, you envy and covet and you cannot obtain. What is it we're wanting to obtain? What should we want to obtain? Obtain same word that you may obtain grace, mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

In time of need, time of pressure, time of disunity, time of disharmony, time of displeasure, time of dissatisfaction. This is pretty much something we encounter to a greater or lesser extent every day. We are in a conflict that is not against flesh and blood.

It's against our own nature. It's against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age. So with our Hebrews chapter 10 passage put Hebrews 4 16, we can approach boldly.

Let him ask in faith, chapter 1 of James, nothing doubting. Hold fast our confession. Remember our hope.

Put things in divine perspective, in the eternal view. And the things of this earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. The face of the Lord Jesus in that great song.

So back to James chapter 4. If you go the way of the world, if you try to make friends with the world, borrow the world's tools, you know, this is what we do with our friends. We borrow their tools. In some cases, our friends give us tools.

I've been richly blessed in the tool department because I have a friend who gets tools, uses tools, has an abundance of tools and is gracious enough to share his tools. We do not want to use the tools of the world because the world is our friend. Anybody can carp.

Anybody can backbite. Anybody can gossip and complain. Anybody can character assassinate.

Anybody can harbor bitterness, jealousy, envy. Anybody can in the world can be unforgiving. Where does forgiveness operate? This is Ephesians 4 32.

I'm quoting, but be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. We are nothing. We have nothing that we have not received in

Christ.

We are blessed Ephesians chapter one. There is the menorah, the seven fold in hymns that you find in Ephesians in him. We are called in him.

We are chosen in him. We are elect in him. We are sanctified in him.

We have sonship, inheritance, priesthood, election. Everything we have comes through Christ because in him we are forgiven and in him we are cleansed. Parable of the unforgiving servant.

His master forgives him a huge debt. In modern terms, it's millions of dollars. He's got a sub servant who owes him a little bit and he won't forgive it.

And the scary part of that story, we like to think about the verses that say when we confess our sins, God separates them from us as far as the East is from the West. They're gone. They are no more with one exception.

If we do not forgive one another, our forgiveness is revoked. This is a sobering thought. But remember the parable the Lord Jesus told when the master found out that the servant that he had forgiven this great debt refused to forgive his own servant, the master unforgave the debt and put him in the debtor's prison until he should pay every penny.

Powerful motivation to not get petty and hold a grudge and bear ill will. I don't know about you. I don't want my sins unforgiven.

There are too many. I don't want my forgiveness revoked. I forgive you unconditionally.

I don't care what you've done. I don't care what you've said. I don't care to the extent that it is in my periphery in any way, shape or form.

Trust me when I tell you I forgive you. God has forgiven me. And all of us can think of things that we would rather forget.

And God in his grace has cleansed us, restored us, hugged us to his breast and forgiven us. That is valuable and precious. And it's not worth sacrificing out of a James situation where we've got some axe to grind, bone to pick, burr under the saddle.

Pick your figure of speech. It's not worth it. We should hold fast to our confession of who we are and why we're here.

What Christ has done for us, what God the Father has graced us with, his grace is greater and he has given it. Just like he gives wisdom. His wisdom is grace.

The heavenly wisdom is grace. We can't forget this. James is in the Bible, in the New Testament before us this morning for a reason.

So back to chapter four. He gives more grace. This is why he says God resists the proud.

Why would we not do this? It makes so much sense. It is so clear and so wonderful, such a powerful divine truth. Why would anybody not jump at this and revel and bask in the grace of God, in the forgiveness of God, the provision of God, the future hope that God provides? Why would we not rest in this and dwell by the oasis of the water of life that these promises provides? Why would we not? Pride.

God resists the proud. Somewhere in the mix, if we are not practicing this, if we are not soaking ourselves in it and sprinkling our hearts from an evil conscience, washing our own bodies, try to go wash somebody else's body with pure water. The only extent to which we wash someone else is the way the Lord Jesus did in the upper room.

He girded himself with a towel. He got a basin and he bent down, he knelt, and he washed the feet of his disciples. There's that interchange with Peter.

This is not salvation. You don't need your whole body washed, but your feet need to be washed. This is what you pick up as you travel through the world.

Jesus washes our feet, and then when he finishes, he says, as I have done for you, you should do for one another. It is as bad as the Jews binding phylacteries on their heads and on their hands and putting the scriptures on their doorposts in a literal fashion. There's no harm in doing that if you understand the truth that is behind it.

There are foot washing churches, which I think is just weird. I'm sorry, it's weird. Jesus' point was the daily road dirt that you pick up in failure, in defilement, in exposure to the world.

Even if you are walking the narrow road, you will pick up dirt on your feet. The Lord Jesus cleanses us. We confess our known sins.

God is faithful and just to forgive us all our sins, even the ones we're not aware of. We don't know that we've been tainted. We don't know that ideas have been subconsciously planted in us from media and from exposure to the internet and the corruption and the defilement and the presence of evil that is all around us, earthly, sensual, demonic.

You can't help it. Moving through the world, living in a fallen nature, dwelling with other people who are equally fallen, we pick up road dirt on our feet. God forgives us.

The Lord Jesus washed his disciples' feet and said, As I have done for you, so you should do for one another. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. And we just saw that in Ephesians 4.32. We forgive.

It isn't worth it. The poison that we carry within us will spread. The cancer of unforgiveness is a side effect of pride.

It is pride that keeps us from forgiving one another. I'm too important to let that go. You hurt me too badly, and it was unjust and unfair, and I'm not letting that go.

It's pride. We have to have humility. God resists the proud, but he gives grace.

This greater grace that he wants to give, who gets it? Not everybody. It's not unconditional greater grace. God will not give that greater grace to the proud.

What is the result of not receiving God's greater grace? You are trapped in your sensual nature that is earthly. You will be subject to demonic pressure of all kinds in all different areas. We will be divisive.

We will be a curse and not a blessing. It's not worth it. I throw myself on God's grace.

We all have to do that. What is the alternative? It's horrible. Who would do that? Only if we turn away from the perfect law of liberty.

This is why James said, when you receive this word that I'm about to give you, don't turn away and forget it. You're like a man that sees his face in a mirror, leaves, and straightway forgets what he saw. We're seeing this this morning in the perfect word of God, and we have got to remember it.

We have got to think about it this afternoon. We need to think about it tomorrow morning. We need to think about it in the middle of the day tomorrow.

We need to recall it to mind tomorrow afternoon. Tomorrow evening, the next day. How many times have I pointed out? The pattern in scripture is a minimum of three times a day.

We have got to stop and take stock. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he will hear my voice. I will ask my father for wisdom that is from above, because that wisdom that is from above, verse 17 of the previous chapter, is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield.

I will forgive and forget. I will yield. I'll yield the point.

As Paul tells the Corinthians, I will rather let myself suffer loss than take you to any court, especially not before unbelievers. Once again, friend of the world. I'm going to use the world's standards of judgment.

If this happened to somebody out in the world, they would be angry. They would be irascible. They would backbite.

They would carp. They would complain. They would tell people what a rascal you are.

It's the ways of the world. It's friendship with the world, and it makes us an enemy of God, and

God will resist us because it is sourced in pride. That's what James is talking about.

The prayer you can always pray, and you know that God will answer it with a yes, is, Lord, expose my pride. Use your word like a fire and like a hammer to break those rocks in pieces. Jeremiah 23, 29.

It's not my word like a fire set the Lord. It's the hammer that can break what nothing else can break in our souls, which is our pride. He resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

I've got to cultivate humility. That means acknowledging that if there's a common denominator in a whole series of problems, that common denominator is me. I need to check myself before I go assigning responsibility and blame.

So, verse 7. Therefore submit to God and resist the devil. Don't be a friend of the world. That takes care of the earthly part of that bad wisdom back in verse 15 of the previous chapter.

Submit to God. This takes humility. It is submission.

God knows better than me. God's provision is better. His grace is more powerful.

Resist the devil. This takes care of the demonic part of 315. He will flee from you these influences, these ideas that get planted in our mind as we view the political or the economic or the social or the international or whatever else is going on in the world.

Isn't it amazing how peaceful the day is if you never turn on your TV and never look at your phone? God has created a bubble of blessing and an environment of peace. And we willfully breach it. We reach outside of it and we pull things in that we can't do anything about, that do nothing but disrupt our peace and allow the demonic and the satanic to corrupt us, to deflect us, to distract us.

Every minute I spend thinking about what somebody did over there, whether in my near periphery or out in the world, is a minute I'm not operating in God's wisdom and God's peace. And I will be harmful to myself and harmful to any believer in my periphery, not to mention outsiders. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, and his demons and his ideas and his influences will flee with him.

It isn't the personal devil that is being talked about here. Satan's got much more important items on his agenda than messing with Sam out in Claremore in the sticks. He's over in Turkey messing with Erdogan or something.

He could be in Russia. He could be stirring up wars and rumors of wars. But he's not messing with me.

So why does James say resist the devil and he will flee from me? It's his minions. It's his

influences. It's his agenda and his program.

I need to resist it. And I do that with divine wisdom, wisdom that is from above. Draw near to God.

Hebrews chapter 10, Hebrews chapter 4. We just saw it. Draw near, approach, qualify yourself first, sprinkle your heart, wash your body, claim that greater grace. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Drawing near is an act of humility, of recognition of need. Humility is recognizing our need. At the point that we think we don't need God's greater grace, we're done.

We have been co-opted, subverted by Satan. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. What a promise.

What is better? Name me something is better than our heavenly father, the creator God of the universe, moving toward us like the father of the prodigal. When he saw him still afar off, drawing near, he ran out to meet him, got him a robe and a ring and a great meal, celebrated the removal of that separation and distance. This is a promise of God.

If we cultivate humility and if we draw near, full assurance of faith, heart sprinkled, body washed, recognizing our great high priest who sacrificed himself, who is the torn veil that lets us come in and find mercy and grace to help in time of need. I ask you, who doesn't want this? Who can't figure out the advantage of this over anything you can think of? So why don't we do it more often? Why don't we treasure it and prize it and avail ourselves of it at every opportunity? Draw near to God, he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, wash your bodies.

Hebrews chapter 10. Purify your hearts, heart having been sprinkled from an evil conscience. Do you think that Paul and James didn't learn from the very same Lord? They are both apostles, both instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the Lord Jesus truth coming through messengers to us for our benefit. Jesus said, I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you. My spirit will come and be a comfort and you will know the truth and the truth will liberate you.

This is that truth. This is what frees us from bondage to our nature. So, cleanse your hands, same as wash your bodies.

Purify your hearts, same as sprinkling your heart from an evil conscience. You double-minded. Reference back to chapter 1. Double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

When we miss this, everything starts to unravel. Everything comes unglued. The corruption spreads, the infection moves and taints.

The cancer metastasizes. If we allow part of our soul to know that we are believers and we

occasionally pray and we think about scripture once in a while, but the other part of our soul, disukas is the Greek word, two-souled. We talked about people that think they have a two-spirit.

The Bible says, two-spirits, you are unstable in all your ways. Everything gets ruined. So, how important is this? Lament and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Again, we've come to understand James's style. What is the second fruit of the spirit? Right after love, what comes next? Joy.

And yet James says here, don't laugh. Let your laughter be turned to mourning. And your joy to gloom.

Why would this be? Someone who is not dwelling in the spirit, not availing themselves of everything we've been looking at this morning is laughing for the wrong reasons and has a superficial, ephemeral, transient kind of joy. Any unbeliever can have that kind of joy. Any unbeliever can laugh that laugh.

It doesn't last. It doesn't build into eternity. It doesn't partake of the divine.

It doesn't glorify God. It doesn't appreciate the Lord Jesus. This is the wisdom of the world that is earthly, sensual.

It pleases me. I'm laughing and I'm tickled about it. And it's demonic.

There's Halloween coming up the end of October. They're already putting the jack-o'-lanterns out. And you get these little sound-operated things that are motion-activated.

People put them in their yards. Little kids come up with their pillowcase. I always like to use a pillowcase for my Halloween candy.

And you walk past this thing and there's this evil cackle, this diabolical laugh that comes out of these things. And that's the laughter that needs to stop. Not the demonic laugh.

Not the satanic laugh. Not the laugh of the world that laughs at people of faith. That laughs at the quote-unquote need for an invisible friend.

You're backward. You're believing stuff that was written by goat herds 2,000 years ago and more. Laughter, derision, sarcasm, superiority, arrogance.

This is the kind of laughter that needs to stop, that needs to be corked and replaced. Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Humble yourselves. Notice the very next verse tells you that this is characteristic of the proud who need to humble themselves. If the humble are joyful, we saw that in chapter one.

Let the poor rejoice in his exaltation. Boast in it. Celebrate it.

But if we're proud and if our arrogance and if our sense of superiority is fueling satisfaction at the plight of others or self-congratulation because we think we're smarter than others and we know more than they do and we've got stuff figured out that they don't, that needs to change. This is a description of a species of repentance. Cleanse your hands if you're practicing sin.

Purify your hearts if you've got a double soul. Lament and mourn and weep. Take stock of yourself and recognize that you're fooling yourself, thinking that friendship with the world is a good thing.

Acting like they do. Lament, mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. Humility is the key to receiving God's grace, God's healing, God's power to transform us, to renew us, to cleanse us, to give us grace and mercy that enables us then to be gracious and merciful to those in our periphery, to forgive others because we have been forgiven and so on. Well, that brings us now to verse 11.

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. Notice he specifically says the problem amongst the brethren is speaking evil of one another. He doesn't say stop stabbing each other, brethren, stop slashing each other's throats and murdering each other because that's not the problem in this group.

The problem is selfishness, arrogance, and being inconsiderate of others. Paul saw this problem in Corinth. You come together to share the Lord's table, as it were, a table of fellowship, and you're elbowing the poor out of the way because you're hungry.

Somebody brought some really good food for the potluck. I'm going to get me some of that. I had some of that last time and it was great.

And disrespecting the body of the Lord. People think that that Corinthians passage is about communion or celebrating the little cup of Kool-Aid on the cracker. It's not.

The body that Paul is talking about is just like what James is talking about here. There's war among your members. You are disrespecting the body, which is your fellow believers.

And just like James pointing out the treatment of the poor by those who are well off as a symptom of arrogance, not humility, insensitivity, instead of that consideration of one another to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law.

Why? What is the connection there? When you first read this, you say, well, I think my brother made a really terrible mistake over here, and I'm going to tell him and everybody else about it.

How is that judging the law? Because when someone in Israel, someone who is a brother, a fellow Israelite, malfunctions, it is the law that identifies the infraction. It is the law that details the response, the penalty, the treatment, the fine, or whatever it might be.

The law is the standard by which Israelites were judged, not individual Israelites saying, you've insulted me. I'm going to burn your fields and murder your family. You say the law is inadequate to deal with this person.

I need to deal with it. I've got a better idea than the law has. In our day, what does it mean? Scripture says we should treat each other a certain way, in humility, with forgiveness, with flexibility, and absorb a wrong ourselves.

Paul says to the Corinthians, you're taking each other to court and that before unbelievers. Why not rather suffer loss? Jesus said, if somebody gets your coat, give them your cloak also. Self-sacrifice is in view.

Be the adult in the room. The stronger brethren should bear with the weaker. If you think this was something that an immature believer perpetrated, let it go.

Disinvest. Let it slide. Forgive it.

Forget it. Move on. That's the exhortation.

But if you say, no, I've got a way to deal with this, and I will inflict some penalties. I'm going to make some consequences happen here. I feel hurt.

I'm going to hurt that person right back. You're saying that the word of God's approach, for Jews it was the law, is inadequate. You're judging the law.

Well, the law is insufficient. The law doesn't handle this. The word of God doesn't know that this is what was going to happen in terms of my treatment.

So you're judging the law. Can't do that. There's one lawgiver who is able to save and destroy.

Let God sort it out. If we suffer a wrong, how many injustices did the Lord Jesus suffer? Did he pronounce judgment from the cross and everybody that talked bad about him and accused him falsely and told people that he was a rascal and in league with Satan? He's casting out demons by the prince of demons. What did Jesus do to any of those people that said those things and endeavored to turn people away from him and obfuscate and cause impediments to his ministry? Absolutely nothing.

God will judge. And this is what we need to cultivate in our own minds. There's one lawgiver.

Who are you to judge another? Hold fast your confession. He who has promised is faithful. Vengeance is mine.

I will repay, saith the Lord. My word lays out how this is supposed to happen. Trust it.

Know it. Implement it. And then put things in God's hands.

Now we come to verse 13. Come now. Put a finger on verse 13 and look at chapter 5, verse 1. Come now.

You who say, and then in chapter 5, verse 1, come now, you rich. This is the same group. And this word come now tells you, figuratively speaking, this is a figure of speech.

But these people that James is now going to address in the second person are not in the group. He doesn't say brethren anywhere in here. This is the pronoun trouble that we have because we don't understand that James, picture James talking to the brethren.

They're in a room. Maybe they're in an upper room. And he is talking to them through this letter.

And he says, brethren, it shouldn't be this way. Brethren, let us do this. Brethren, over and over again, he says, brethren.

When he comes to this section, James looks out the window. Shouts outside the room and says, come now, you out there. How do I know this? Such a beautifully crafted book.

What did we see in chapter 1? These people get excited if a rich person comes into the fellowship. When they see a rich guy, they say, oh, come sit up here. Why? None of them are rich.

This group of brethren are not rich. They are the poor. And that's why James says, if you're poor, celebrate your coming exaltation.

And the rich need to be wary because they are going to be taken down. That's chapter 1. When you see someone dressed in fine robes, they've got silver and you make much over them. That's because this is not a rich group.

They have problems. But not knowing what to do with their riches is not one of them. So what do rich people do? What did Jesus say? It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom.

Why? Riches occupy the mind. Earthly, sensual, demonic, all come through the love of money. It is the root of all evil, Jesus said.

So what are the rich going to do? Well, today or tomorrow, I'm going to take my money and I'm going to go to a city and I'm going to use it to make a profit. Poor people don't travel to a city and say, I'm going to spend a year there. They can't afford it.

This is the rich. So come now, you who say, you beyond the group. Today or tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell and make a profit.

We do this kind of pronoun abuse in slightly different ways, even in our own English. When somebody buys a car, let's say it's back in the days when donut spares first came out. You don't have a full-size tire in the trunk.

You got this little miniature, weird looking thing. And so somebody is explaining, oh, I've got one of those and I had to use it. Here's what you do.

You take that spare and put it on the ground. You take the lug nuts off and you use the word you, even though the person you're talking to has never done this and may never do it. If you're talking about building a road, well, you take a bulldozer and you get a road grader and you get a truckload of gravel.

We use the word you in the abstract. This is what is done. That's what James is doing here.

He could just have easily said, people who, those who, that's the use of the word. Why does he use you and not just say, come now, those who? He is trying to implant this in the minds of people who are impressed with the rich. So impressed that whenever a rich person shows up, he's already said in chapter one, why are you treating them with preference and ignoring somebody that's got dirty clothes? Don't you know, these are the rich who oppress you, brethren.

That's a brethren passage. These are the rich that abuse you. So it's not the rich in the group.

There aren't rich in the group, but he's, but the pronoun throws things off. So in conclusion here, the come now, you're going to go to such and such a city, spend a year, make a profit. You do not know what will happen tomorrow.

What is your life? It is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. But now you boast in your arrogance.

You boast in your arrogance. He has laid the foundation early on about the hazards of harboring pride and not having the humility to appeal to God's grace. God resists the proud.

You boast in your arrogance. Next time, this coming Wednesday, we're going to see the four places in this book where James talks about boasting. You can look for them for your homework between now and Wednesday.

Two of them are positive and two of them are negative. I'll give you a clue. Some of it's in chapter one.

But this is a manifestation of pride to believe we know how things are going to unfold. And those

who do so are in this group that needs to mourn and weep. And we're going to see why when we resume.

It is so fascinating. You don't know it, but in this passage, we have the word poison. Poison.

Unless you've got ants, nobody likes poison. That's what we'll pick up on Wednesday. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the wonderful way you reveal your divine wisdom. And upon request, you can implant it in our hearts and in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It can transform us.

It will maintain our humility, our orientation to your grace and our ability to represent the Lord Jesus and to reflect his priorities as we endeavor to be lights that shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation so that those who are in our periphery will be drawn to you and begin to enjoy the wonderful blessings that we have in Christ. We pray that these words in the hands of the Holy Spirit will renew our minds and transform us so that we can truly live in the light of humility and divine wisdom. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.