

James 26-09-16a

Greetings, it is Wednesday night here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 16th of September, 2026. Thank you to all of those who expressed well wishes on my father's 96th birthday yesterday.

It's hard to believe that I will soon have a father who is a century old, but there you have it. We continue our study tonight in the book of James. We are in chapter 4, moving toward chapter 5. We have a symmetrical pair of statements here from the author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And they are clearly marked, they have a clear message. It carries the movement and the argument and the theme of this book forward in a wonderfully compact and elegant fashion. And it has great personal application for each one of us.

So let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll begin. Father, we are so dependent on your grace, on your faithfulness to cleanse us and forgive us of our sins. The presence and power of your Holy Spirit, the life and the strength that come to us from your word.

The example of the Lord Jesus who showed us the way to live in human flesh, enabled and empowered by those manifestations of your provision. We thank you for this passage that is before us. We pray that your Holy Spirit will teach it to us in such a way that it is effective, meaningful, that it produces thinking and awareness in the hours and days ahead.

And that we make application that strengthens us and equips us for every good work now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

This is such a fascinating passage. It might not appear so at first blush. But let's read it and see how far we get.

We're beginning in chapter 4 verse 11 of James. Keep in mind, contextually, the first chapter began with us looking at ourselves. When in the third person, James makes this suggestion that we can be tested.

We fall into various trials. What should our attitude be? What should our recourse be? What is the way in which we move forward in those trials? This is the request for wisdom from God. We look first to ourselves.

This is going to be a common thread moving through the book. The source, in many cases, of difficulty is, in fact, within our own heart and our own nature. And if we have hopes of living a life that pleases God and reflects His values, His goals, His priorities, His wisdom, we have to begin by sweeping our own house.

And this is what we had. Enduring temptation in verse 12. Being approved, receiving the crown of

life.

Knowing the hazards when our desires conceive in verse 15. You remember here in our recent context, He has returned to these desires being a source of conflict in our members, in our midst. And to not be deceived in verse 16.

The things that are good and perfect come to us from our Father in heaven. And that was chapter 1. We then moved into chapter 2. And understanding at the end of chapter 1 that we should not be hearers only, but doers of the word. God's word is the way that we are transformed.

It is the way that we are enabled and empowered. It is the way that we are illuminated with God's grace and God's power to live this supernatural life. And it isn't enough to expose ourselves to the word.

It has to be incorporated, digested, brought to bear in our words and in our actions. That should then come out in the way we treat each other. In the way we treat those that we might consider from a worldly point of view to be influential, powerful, helpful.

James warns against being impressed with the rich and trying to curry their favor as a means of getting ahead. This is an alternative to listening to the voice of God, the wisdom of God, the word of God, and the spirit of God. James doesn't have a lot to say about the spirit, interestingly.

I attribute that to the early date, the early phase of the church age. James is the first apostle to be martyred. And the full effects and ramifications of the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost took time to appreciate and to enter into.

And Paul is the one that really mines the depths of that wonderful truth. But for James, he grew up under the law. He learned under the Lord Jesus' teaching.

And that all-powerful word is at the forefront in his thinking. It takes nothing away from the spirit, but he isn't the apostle that communicates that half of the equation nearly so well as the apostle Paul. So over and over again, the effects of this should be that we bridle our tongue, that we bridle our attitudes, we bridle our desires, our instinct to please ourselves and be pleased by what is going on.

This spills over into how we treat others in chapter 2, showing partiality in verse 9. You commit sin, judging our fellow believers in verses 12 and 13. Then the fact that our faith shouldn't be something internal in the same way that we don't only hear the word, but we practice it. This faith should be manifest with an effect, not just having faith and claiming faith, but having it shown in our behavior, in our works.

Do you see that faith is working together in verse 21? With works in Abraham's case, he believed God. It was credited to him for righteousness, but it worked itself out as he was willing to put his

son's life on the line. So that is chapter 2. You come to chapter 3 and it is manifest in the tongue and the fact that it needs to be tamed.

So this outward movement, again, that I'm describing in following James' argument begins internally with the heart, with looking to God and trusting Him without wavering or doubting to supply what we need to get us through testing. There's testing in various areas, whether it is our own attitudes, whether it is the treatment of others, whether it is what we say, whether it is working itself out in our actions, and we don't just have a spoken faith or a claimed faith, but a life that reflects our faith. And that carried us through much of chapter 3 to down to verse 13, who is wise in understanding it ought to be manifest in our conduct.

If we have bitter envy and self-seeking, do not boast and lie against the truth. That takes us to chapter 4. Conflicts in our midst with our fellow believers can be traced back to these desires. And these desires are going to continue to be the thread that ties together much of these exhortations and observations, especially when we get to where we are this evening.

So, friendship with the world. And it isn't just being friendly with people who are in the world. This is adopting the ways of the world, accepting that paradigm, and working within that framework where we are indistinguishable from unbelievers in how we pursue what we believe is beneficial and pleasing.

That's friendship with the world. We tend to share opinions with our friends. Our friends tend to be bent the same direction socially, economically, politically.

And this friendship with the world is to adopt the ways of the world in these various areas, including personal success. This goes back to the cultivating in chapter 2 of those who might show up at the meeting. Nobody in the group is particularly well off.

Here comes someone that's got economic power. They're well off, fine clothes, gold and silver. Let's cultivate them, because influential friends, powerful friends, will benefit me instead of recognizing the incredibly more vast and effective care and love that our Heavenly Father has for us, knowing what we need, when we need it, how it should be brought to us, and so on.

The book of James is endeavoring to lift us up and out of the fleshly, worldly view. And that theme continues in verse 11 of chapter 4. Do not speak evil of one another. This goes back to the earlier, do not judge one another, find fault with one another, and so on.

He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law. We saw why that was. God gave the law to adjudicate differences and disputes.

We go to the Word of God for guidance and for strength and inner peace in times that are potentially going to be characterized by conflict or by difference. Let the Word of God settle it. If it doesn't, we're saying the Word's not good enough.

God's way is not good enough. We become judges of the law when we try to judge one another. So that's his point there.

Now we come to verse 13. We started this last time. Come now.

This is a fascinating call. It's the first time we've seen it in the book. Come now.

We're going to see it in chapter 5, verse 1, our symmetrical second passage tonight. But you find this, you're welcome to turn there if you like. There's nothing better than the rustling of Bible pages.

But back in Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel, you find this recurring call. This is almost a quotation with adverse effect. Genesis 11, 3. The people who have assembled in the plain of Shinar and are not following God's encouragement to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, they say, no, no, we need to take steps in case another flood comes.

So in 11, 3, they said to one another, come. Come. This is the Hebrew equivalent of what we see in verse 13 here.

Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They had bricks for stone and they had asphalt for mortar. Verse 4. And they said, come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens.

The idea here, it's really the first time you see this emphasized clear back in the book of Genesis. Come, let us do for ourselves. Let us build independent of God to solve a problem.

And they could have rationalized and decided that God did not solve the problem of the flood. Although it's God who sent the flood. In any case, again, first in verse 3, again in verse 4. Come, let us build ourselves a city.

Let us build ourselves a tower whose top is in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves. There's a great album by Roger Miller called Making a Name for Myself.

And he's got some tools and he's carving the letters of his name out of pieces of wood. And they're partially hung on the wall. Making a name for myself.

Let us make a name for ourselves. A reputation for self-reliance and independence and capability and effectiveness in meeting challenges. We'll do this for ourselves.

Otherwise, we'll be scattered, brought over the face of the whole earth. Which is, in fact, what God desired. Be fruitful, multiply, fill the land, fill the world, fill the earth.

You find this from Solomon in Ecclesiastes chapter 2, verse 1. I said in my heart, come now. I will test you with mirth. Therefore, enjoy pleasure.

But surely this was also vanity. What does the Word of God say about this? Old Testament and new. Proverbs 27, verse 1. Do not boast about tomorrow.

He's going to talk about boasting. He's going to use the noun and the verb. Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

James knows his Old Testament. Isaiah 56, verse 12. Come, one says, I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink.

Tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant. We will have even more. In our passage, they're planning on a profit, planning to have more than they started with.

Isaiah 56, verse 12. And you remember Jesus' parable of the man with his houses and barns in Luke 12, 17 and following. This man thinks within himself, saying, what shall I do since I have no room to store my crops? So he said, I will do this.

I will pull down my barns and build greater. And there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have many goods, laid up for many years.

Take your ease. Eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night your soul will be required of you.

Then whose will those things be which you have provided? Back to the theme of Ecclesiastes. In the early chapters, Solomon points out the effort that it takes to accumulate and to acquire and to assemble, only to have it passed on and owned by others. Matthew points this out in chapter 20, verse 12.

At the end of the parable of the workers in the field, those that worked all day and those that only worked one hour received the same denarius. And it offends the worldly mind. Much effort should bring much pay.

An hour's effort should bring an hour's pay. And it is in conflict. Friendship with the world is enmity with God.

God can dispense his grace as he sees fit. And we should be grateful for what he provides to us and not look over the fence and say, why don't I have what that person has? Why do I seem to have a tougher row to hoe and work longer in the sun and so on? In Ezekiel chapter 7, verse 12, there is a prophecy, and it is reflected in the revelation. The time has come.

This is Ezekiel 7, 12. The time has come. The day draws near.

Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is on the whole multitude. God is going to judge the entire system and remove it. And to get too invested in investments, in monetary profit, in a retirement fund, or a portfolio, or a bank balance, is to transfer our faith from the grace

and the provision of God to the structures and the provisions of the world.

And we are warned against it. So again, do not boast about tomorrow. Proverbs 27, verse one, Matthew 6, 34.

Jesus said, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. We have our hands full negotiating today.

These individuals that James speaks of have a whole year mapped out of what's going to happen. And when you see his argument in verse 14, these individuals say they're going to go to another city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit. Make a profit is a very interesting word.

This make a profit has connotations. This is from the word kerdos, K-E-R-D-O-S. And it's neutral in the sense that when Paul says the things that I thought were gain, it's kerdos.

I count them as loss for the sake of Christ. It is also used by Paul for winning souls. When he says, I become all things to all men in order that I may by all means win some.

And the word win is the verbal form of this word for profit. It is to gain, to win, to acquire. It can be a good or a bad thing.

It's determined by context. What is our context here? It is the preceding verb, buy and sell. This is the word emporium.

And all you have to remember about this word is we get the English word emporium from this. The word means to go trading, to traffic, to import for sale, to deal in, or to use a person. It is focused on taking something and making more out of it.

The value is in the thing that you have and the effort you put into multiplying it. It is a completely earthly enterprise. Go back to flip a page or two back to chapter one, verse 10.

Chapter one, verse 10. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich let him glory. The word glory there is boast.

It's kaukaomai, and it means to boast. Boasting is generally negative. Paul will use it and say, I'm going to boast in your accomplishments as believers.

And he converts something bad into something good. He doesn't boast in his bona fides or his accomplishments as a Pharisee. He doesn't boast in his position in Christ or his office as an apostle.

He says, if I'm going to boast, I'm going to boast in the fruit that has been born in your lives because of the preaching of the gospel that has been accomplished by Paul and his companions. Here's the verse I would suggest you put in the margin in your Bible next to this passage. We're

looking at James chapter four, verses 15 and 16.

You ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

All such boasting. There's boasting that's not evil. Paul is the example.

But to have confidence and to celebrate your personal wisdom, your perspicacity, your planning ahead, your grasp of how money is to be made and advantage is to be gained. There is a song that I won't inflict on you, but one line in it is talking about a man. And it says, he used to ride the markets like a vulture on the wind.

It's a very memorable phrase. He rode the markets like a vulture on the wind. But this guy ends up the last sound that he ever hears is the engine in his car running and the garage door coming down because he suffered a catastrophic loss and he's committing suicide by carbon monoxide.

But he used to ride the markets like a vulture on the wind. And the self-confidence and the arrogance and the competitive satisfaction that is gained in this world produces this kind of boasting. So, here's the verse I suggest.

And let's turn back to it. But write this in the margin. Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24.

Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24. And if it sounds familiar, it should because it's from our memory verses. Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24.

It begins, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man glory in his might. Nor let the rich man glory in his riches.

I have to think this verse or something close to it was in James' mind, brought there by the Holy Spirit when he wrote these words. Because glory is boast. This is the Hebrew equivalent.

It is translated with Kau Kaomai over and over again in the Septuagint. You could translate every place you see glory, you could say boast. Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom.

Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Nor let the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who glories, let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness and righteousness in the earth.

For in these I delight, says the Lord. James is talking about people giving into their delights and what pleases them. We are called to immerse ourselves in that in which the Lord delights.

Where is God's pleasure? If we are going to boast in something, as Paul boasts in what God has done in and through the communication of the gospel, we glory and we are proud, if you will, that we understand and know the Lord in a meaningful and genuine way. It affects our attitudes. It

affects how we talk.

We are able to bridle our tongues because we are constantly aware of the Lord's presence. Hard to be proud when the Lord is at hand. Two or three gathered together, there am I in the midst.

Let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me. Let him glory that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness. All three of these things are present in our James passage.

Loving kindness toward one another, leaving judgment up to the Lord, looking to God for genuine righteousness, what is truly right, not the wisdom of the world, not friendship with the world and its standards of what passes for goodness. These are the things I delight in. God delights in loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

So you can put in the margin there next to verse 16, boasting in your arrogance, all such boasting is evil, James 1, 9. Let the rich glory boast, same word, in his humiliation, in his humility, because humility leads to all of those things that are in Jeremiah 9, verses 23 and 24. Then the conclusion, and something that should affect us all. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him, it is sin.

We have looked into the perfect law of liberty. We have been hearers of the word, which tells us what good actions are. If we know this, if we have heard it, if we've seen it and we do not apply it, that is sin.

That is something that needs to come up for confession, acknowledgement, and a change of heart and a change of mind. To know to do good, both in the realm of our personal thought life, in the realm of how we view others, do we look at them as a way to gain advantage or a way to disassociate from that which might damage our reputation or reduce us in the eyes of those we want to curry favor with, that you saw back in the earlier chapters? If we know to do good and we don't, that in and of itself, it is a sin of omission. We know what is good and we're not practicing it.

We're not doing it. Well, that is the first come now. And it is the strategy, the approach, the attitude that we wake up in the morning and say, this is how I'm going to get ahead today.

The example is a merchant who is going to buy and sell. And this word for buying and selling, I won't give you the Greek. It's kind of a long word.

This emporuomai has the idea that you will tilt the scales if necessary. You will cheat the customer if necessary. This is maximum profit, whatever it takes.

Maximize profit, get the cheapest product, sell it at the highest price. This is the buying and selling. And so we find it in the revelation.

In Babylon, for example, and you remember the merchants there in Babylon who mourn when the

city goes up in smoke. This is the same idea, the same notion. Merchants are a noun form of this word.

And they are the poremos, those who practice this emporuomai. And the merchants, every place you see merchant in Revelation, it's guys who are engaged in trying to make a profit and they mourn when their ability to make a profit. They're not worried about the lives that were lost when Babylon is destroyed.

They're not mourning and weeping because tens of thousands of people are no longer alive. They're crying over their lost profits. That's how invested they are in it.

And remember that they deal in all of those different categories of goods up to and including the bodies and souls of men. We saw those categories recently in our Revelation study. That's the merchant mentality that James calls out here.

We shouldn't have anything to do with that. That is friendship with the world. Well, that brings us to chapter 5, verse 1 and that is where we will pick up when we come back from our break.