

James 26-09-20b

We continue our study now in the book of James. We're reviewing and summarizing what we've learned because we are about to conclude our study here in chapter five. We looked at chapter one, chapter two, chapter three.

We've seen the weaving together of these themes, the beautiful way the argument is advanced. We've noted in past sessions, the tact with which James will introduce things in the third person and then turn the corner and bring it around to second person application and a sharper point on the topic at hand. We have seen the introduction here in chapter four to eyes on self and that when we become subjective in that particular area, it inevitably results in conflict.

Where do conflicts, divisions, wars and fights come from? In chapter four, it is failure to go back to chapter one and do internal housekeeping, it is our desires. Instead of desiring God's wisdom, making for peace, the wisdom that is from above is peaceable. We saw in chapter three, verse 17, it's pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield full of mercy and good fruits.

The opposite of that is going to exist where the wisdom from above is not present. And that also tells us how to fix it. Wars and fights, where do they come from among you? These are the desires for pleasure that war in your members, war in the midst of your group.

You crave things, you desire things and you don't have them. There is always something we can look at as a lack or a need that is unfulfilled. There are things in the Proverbs that are talked about that these things are never satisfied.

And if we exist in the ways of the world, if we allow our fallen nature and the influence of the satanic and the demonic to infiltrate our thinking, we will always be dissatisfied. You see this in the social and in the political realm. There are whole movements and points of view that thrive on telling people you don't have what you ought to have.

And we're here to fight for it. We're going to go after these people that are denying you what is rightfully yours in some area. And any conflict will do.

The temperature of the globe isn't right. The whales are not surviving. The AI is about to kill us all.

Law enforcement is about to kill us all. The government is about to kill us all. People overseas are about to kill us all.

Whatever the crisis that comes to hand, there are those who will use it to create wars and fights, conflict. They have a desire for power, and you've got to unseat whoever currently has the power to take that power, so there's going to be conflict. This should never characterize us.

We can be aware of what's going on. We can certainly support and vote for what seems to be a more biblical approach in whatever area. And sometimes this isn't always in the same party or the

same group or the same candidate.

It's a privilege to exercise our right as a citizen of the United States to vote and to vote our conscience. Hopefully our conscience has been rehabilitated by the word of God, and we're not voting because we've been motivated to fight and oust somebody else just for conflict's sake. There's an awful lot of manipulation, and our current ability for instant viral communication, pretty much any time in a waking moment, there's none of us that can afford to be more than five or six feet away from our phone anymore.

It's just the world in which we live, and that same phone is used to pipe dissension and hate, envy, bitterness, all of the things that characterize the wisdom of the world, and spark jealousy and bitterness and sins of the tongue, pointing out real or perceived malfunctions on the part of others, these things should not be so. The wisdom from above should characterize us in every area of life, purity, peace, gentleness, willingness to yield, so many of these things, there's a city fighting over something or electing a mayor that people are afraid of. I don't live in that city, I'm not in that state, I'm not on that side of the continent, and if I don't turn my TV or the newsfeed on my devices on, I don't know what those folks are doing.

I've got my hands full in my periphery, endeavoring to accept the things I cannot change, this is sort of the willing to yield, those are things I can't change anyway. Why should I get spun up about what's happening in areas where I have no responsibility or control? All I'm doing is giving place in my soul to the devil. Don't give place to the devil and his operations, don't let him distract and deflect.

Where is my life? Where has God placed me geographically, work-wise, family-wise, relationship-wise, spiritually, my opportunities, what is my spiritual gift and where can it operate? I can't do anything. At most, I could identify a good charity and there is nothing wrong with finding a good charity, you have to check them out carefully and decide if you think contributions are actually gonna go to the intended targets or whether it's gonna be soaked up in overhead and advertising and the more TV time, the more you figure the dollar I contributed is putting something on the screen, not actually helping the people in view. You say, well, but that raises funds, that's a calculation we all have to make.

But our responsibility is given to us by God locally. We are in contact with the members of the body of Christ that are next to us. And that is where we must spend our time.

First of all, tending to our own soul, James 1, asking for wisdom, getting ourselves squared away so that we are fit and ready to be used by God in our area of responsibility. So that wisdom is going to express itself as we saw in verse 17 of chapter three. If not, this is the alternative.

And he goes back to describe the wisdom that is not descended from above. It's earthly, sensual and demonic. Now we get an expansion in chapter four.

And you lust and do not have, you envy and covet and cannot obtain. Not murder, envy. I'm convinced this is the text.

You envy and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you do not have because you do not ask. Your whole problem goes back to chapter one.

You lack wisdom. This isn't the fruit of wisdom that is from above, pure, peaceable, willing to yield. This is the opposite.

And you have not asked. Go back to chapter one. You lack wisdom.

Ask of God. Get the wisdom that fixes us internally first. This fixes what is around us in people situations and circumstance situations.

The other two areas where we can become subjective. So adulteresses, you have departed from covenant relationship and loyalty to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the entire suite of blessings that are ours in Christ. You've thrown it over.

You've betrayed it. Adultery is betrayal of trust. It is breach of covenant.

It is unfaithfulness. It is pornia. The essence of pornia, anywhere you find that word in Greek is breach.

It is wrong because it isn't within the bounds of covenant. Adulteresses, friendship with the world is enmity with God. If you want to be a friend of the world, you are making yourself an enemy of God, the exact opposite.

This is the God who saved us, who has fitted us for glory and for a bright future of service and function and basking in and reflecting the glory of God himself, vindicating the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed his blood to purchase us and redeem us out of lostness and fallenness and hopelessness and uselessness, fruitlessness, death. Such a great price was paid. And to selfishly and blindly throw that over is spiritual adultery.

And friendship with the world makes us an enemy of God. Even as believers, even as blood-bought redeemed saints, we become an enemy. This can happen in a family.

You can have children who become enemies of their parents. You can have parents who become enemies of their children. We've seen this in the recent news.

And it is in the realm of the earthly, the sensual, and the demonic. We don't want to partake of that realm. That's what scripture says.

Does it tell us that in vain? Have we been told? And we've walked away from the law of liberty and we don't remember what it said? We don't remember that it applies to us? Do you think the

spirit and the scripture speak to no purpose in communicating this to us? Then a fresh paragraph. That spirit in us is built and desires to operate in the enemy realm, in the opposition to God realm. We're built that way.

That's why up above, earthly wisdom is earthly sensual, comes from that spirit that dwells within us. What can overcome it? As Paul says back in Romans, you remember that wonderful argument in Romans 7, 8, and 9, who will deliver me from the body of this death? I need deliverance. I need salvation.

Well, James is telling us where it comes from. He gives more grace. Left to ourselves, we can't escape it.

We are hopelessly swamped. We are hopelessly trapped in the quicksand of our fallen nature, and there is no escape except the grace of God. And God gives more grace, greater grace.

This is a comparative. There's comparatives and superlatives. Superlative would be the most grace, but this is more grace.

It's more than what? More than all the pull of our fallen nature. Grace that is greater than all our sin, than all our selfishness. God's grace is greater, but it has to be acquired by choice.

We are free to choose. What is the path to receiving that grace? Humbling ourselves, humility. God gives grace to the humble.

Humility is acknowledging need. I don't have what it takes. I am not good.

There, no good thing dwells within me. I was alive once apart from the law, but when the law came, Paul says, sin revived and I died. What I want to do, that I can't do.

And what I don't want to do, that's what I end up doing. Who will deliver me? Greater grace, but it requires acknowledging the need. We've seen humility over and over again.

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Let the poor glory in his exaltation. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.

Recognize need. Do we have a need? Hands up. I can't see you, so this is safe.

Hands up, everybody who doesn't have a need for the greater grace that God brings. I see no hands. And if I could see you, there would be no hands.

We know we need this grace. It's a matter of recognizing it in the moment, in the moment of stress, in the moment of temptation, in the moment of abuse and maltreatment and persecution and injustice near and far. Injustice from the world, injustice from the government, injustice from those who want to silence and eliminate us as a group.

And our viewpoint and our understanding of the word of God. They want it wiped out. They don't want it to be heard in the public square or exposed in schools to young people.

We're opposed near and far. There is greater grace. I can't fight that battle.

I am not eloquent enough. I'm not literate enough. I'm not well-known enough to go out there and make some kind of cognitive difference in the hearts and minds of people.

And even if I were, it's ephemeral, it is transient. Today's social, economic, political battles drop to the side in a few days or a few weeks or a few months. People forget what the political battles were 10 years ago.

Everybody was against law enforcement and saying that one particular group is being killed by law enforcement on a regular basis. Nobody brings that up now. The new soup du jour is AI.

We're all gonna die from AI. Before the problem with law enforcement and they're waning on, when's the last time you saw a protest outside an ICE facility? They've moved on. A new crisis, a new way to distract and deflect and flap the hand while your pocket is being picked.

Before that, it was global warming. And before that, it was the economy's stupid was somebody's mantra. It's always something.

We live a daily life of faith and obedience before the Lord because we know what's coming. The forms of this world are passing away, Paul reminds us. The forms of this world are passing away.

Why invest in it? You're like the man who says, I've got barns, I'm gonna tear them down and build bigger ones so I can store more grain. Foolishly not recognizing that at some point, our soul is required of us and we will stand at the judgment. So that's what James is getting at here.

Such a practical book. The rubber is contacting the road right here. Got problems with people? This is how to fix it.

Got internal problems with corrupt desires and selfish impulses? This is how to fix it. Cultivate humility. Receive with humility the implanted word, which is able to deliver us and to create an environment where we can acquire God's wisdom, which is objective truth.

Now I see myself objectively. I've met the enemy and it's me. I see how to deal with others constructively, fruitfully, beneficially in a way that pleases God and manifests the fruit of the spirit.

I am not just hearing the word as we're doing this morning, but doing the word and doing the work that reflects that word. I've processed it. I've metabolized it.

I've digested it and understood it. And I see how to make it go in my conversations, what I am going to say and what I'm not going to say. Notice this whole idea of conversation is couched in

terms of bridling the tongue.

It doesn't say you're going to have fascinating topics of conversation. The next time you meet someone who has a need, that wisdom from God is going to populate your thoughts and your conversation with these wonderful tidbits of the word of God. It doesn't say here's how you will be positively equipped to say good things.

It says you will develop restraint, constraint, bridling of your tongue. You will know what not to say and when to refrain and to let the other person talk. Rightly or wrongly, when you do speak, it will be fitly spoken.

Apples of gold, pictures of silver from the Proverbs, but the primary aspect of humility and the wisdom of God as a consequence, the implanted word, delivering our own soul first and foremost, and then giving us restraint. Things I will not do, things I will not say, ways I will not act, attitudes I will not adopt. When I do act and speak, it will be sourced in God's wisdom.

That's where we are here in chapter four. So God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, verse seven, submission.

It's a word people don't like to hear, to be submissive. Well, this is an insult. Why should I submit? I am as good as the next person.

Why am I not in charge? Why am I not an equal? Why don't I have an equal say and an equal voice? And just as influential as the next person. The wisdom from above, the wisdom of God is submissive. Humility is recognition of need and submission to God, not submission to any old person.

Abused wives should not continue to submit to an abuser, but there is proper submission. Submit to God and resist the devil. We just have to figure out in our circumstance, where is God and where is the devil? I submit to one and I resist the other.

How do I know which is which? The wisdom from above lets me know. The word of God in my soul, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, with my sins confessed and eliminated so that I can hear clearly and see clearly. So practical.

Resist the devil, he will flee from you. Draw near to God, he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners.

Purify your hearts, you double-minded. If you are double-minded, lament and mourn and weep. If you are a sinner, lament and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. If you are a sinner, if you are one with dirty hands. There is a context here.

All of us aren't supposed to turn our joy to weeping. Joy is the second of the fruits of the Spirit. But if we've drawn near to God, he will draw near to us.

If we have dirty hands, if we are double-minded, we need to clean our hands and purify our hearts. How do you purify your heart? How do you clean your hands? Clean hands, confess your sins. Faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us.

God says, 1 John 1.7, 1 John 1.9, stay in the light. Purify your hearts. Our hearts are purified as we receive with humility, with meekness, the implanted word.

It delivers our souls. It cleanses us, it purifies us. Psalm 51, seen it many times.

And we should lament and mourn. Let our laughter, this is base laughter. This is mocking laughter.

This is subjective laughter, falsely adopted humorous approach, sarcasm, and so on. Turn it to mourning, turn that joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.

He will lift you up. We humble ourselves. Let God lift us.

Which is going to be more stable? Me lifting myself up or God lifting me up? And which would I rather use to humble me? Myself or have God forcibly humble me? I'd rather do it myself. Let me humble myself and let God lift me up. I don't want God humbling me while I'm trying to lift myself up.

It's completely backwards. That's the way of the world. Then we come back to what we saw in chapter three, verse two and verse nine.

Chapter three, verse two, we need to avoid stumbling in word. We need to bridle our tongue as we saw in 126. And in chapter three, verse nine, a tongue that blesses God should not be cursing men.

So do not speak evil of one another, brethren, 411. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. We covered that.

So once again, this humbling of ourselves enables us to deal properly with each other. The source of objectivity versus subjectivity, wrongly gratifying ourselves, wrongly treating others is the objectivity that comes from wisdom. So that will fix this problem of speaking evil of and judging others and making the word of God, the law of God of no effect.

We basically judge it and say, that way is not good enough. I've got a better way. That brings us to verse 13.

And this section, the rest of chapter four, I have labeled in my Bible, the fate of evil boasters.

Nobody wants to wake up in the morning and say, today I am the evil boaster. I'm gonna put on my evil boaster hat.

I'm gonna put on my evil boaster shoes. I'm gonna get in my evil boaster car. I'm gonna go to my evil boaster connections with other people, and I'm gonna boast in evil.

Nobody wakes up intending to do that. We arrive there because we deceive ourselves. We lie to ourselves.

We think that we are holy, righteous, and good, and we're not because we're subjective. Subjectivity, the eyes that we put on ourself lie to us. The eyes that we observe others with lie to us.

And we end up being evil boasters. The only way to expose this and become aware of it is to cultivate humility, receive with meekness, the implanted word, the engrafted word, it said in the King James. I love that word.

That is able to deliver us. So you who say today or tomorrow, I'm gonna go and make a profit. My goal is personal profit.

That is the key to understanding this section. There's nothing wrong with saying, I'm gonna take a trip and I've got an objective. But if your goal is profit, and we looked at some of the Greek involved here, this is profit at the expense of others.

This is willingness to cheat or to beat someone out in order to get a profit. This is profit by any means. And if it wrongs the other person, I'm selling a used car.

I know it's got a bad transmission, but I'm not gonna tell the buyer that. I'm gonna sell it and let them find out later. I got the profit.

They end up with a lemon for a car. But I made a profit. And these guys are plotting and scheming to spend a year in this endeavor.

You ought to be looking at a life of business or commerce or work in terms of what would God have me do? If the Lord wills, what would be pleasing in God's sight in this circumstance, in this regard? And many times, the way that God recommends, a way of integrity, a way of truthfulness, you don't get the profit. You are willing to bring back a faulty product or redo a bad job at your own expense because that's what's right. Not, well, whatever makes me the most money, that's obviously the right way.

So this is a boast. You boast against the law and you judge the law. You boast against what is right and you judge what is right and say, I've got a better way.

And look how much money it made me. Look how far it got me ahead. Look at how I left others in

the dust and gained an advantage.

This boasting is evil. You boast in your arrogance. And you can put with that chapter one, verse nine, and Jeremiah 9, 23 and 24 that we looked at last time.

Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him, it is sin. That is applied to the preceding context. Nothing wrong with making plans.

Nothing wrong with operating a business for profit. Don't have to all be nonprofits, but you can't be doing it knowing that it's not godly. It could be done in a good way.

You know you could do it in a good way, but you don't do it that way. You do it for maximum profit. This extends beyond business to our personal relationships, to what people find out and what we refrain from telling them because we figure it would be better for us to shade, to hide.

We know that it would be good and right to acknowledge and to confess, to restore and renew, but we don't do that. And if we know that that's the right thing, but we don't do it, that becomes sin to us. That brought us to chapter five.

So we finished the section on the fate of evil boasters. We don't like to think of some of those tactics and some of those strategies and some of those behaviors as evil boasting. But James says, if you boil it down, that's what it really is.

It's evil and not good. You know to do good and you're not. You're sinning.

And if you do it as a pattern, it's evil. And you're putting yourself up as having a better idea than the wisdom of God, the wisdom that is from above. I have labeled chapter five, the fate of rich oppressors.

We saw these connected with the come now introduction, looking out the window at those who make this a lifestyle. And James refuses to believe that this is going to pertain to those in the group. He doesn't say, brethren, you've got to stop doing this.

He says, watch out because there are people who do this. A, you don't want to become one. B, you don't want to be victimized by one.

So he's looking out the window and he says, come now you rich, what is the fate? There are miseries that are coming upon you. And if you knew what was coming, you would weep and howl. Just as he said previously back in chapter one, in verse nine of chapter one, the lowly brother glories in exaltation.

Verse 10, the rich in his humiliation as a flower of field he will pass away. No sooner, verse 11 of chapter one, no sooner has the sun risen. They say, here's the sunrise.

Here's the hope of a great day of my profit, of my advantage. No sooner has the sun risen with a

burning heat in withers the grass, its flower falls and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

He's an enemy of God. So you can put 111 out in the margin next to chapter five, verses one and two. You rich weep and howl, your miseries are coming upon you.

Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver are poison as we saw last time. And their poison will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

You have heaped up treasure in the last days. You go to Romans chapter two, those who by patient continuance and well-doing store up for themselves blessing from God. There is the opposite.

Real quickly turn back to Romans chapter two. We have just a few minutes left. Romans chapter two.

Those who in verse four despise the riches of God's goodness forbearance and long suffering, don't know that the goodness of God leads you to repentance, to humility, to change of mind and a seeking of the wisdom that is from above. But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to each one according to his deeds. They keep trying to find conflict between James and Paul.

I think they dovetail so beautifully and describe two sides of the very same coin. Paul says in Romans, his theological magnum opus, God will render to each one according to his works, according to his deeds. Did his faith manifest itself in works or his human ideas? There is eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good, seeking for glory, honor and immortality, but to those who are self-seeking.

Hasn't this been a constant refrain in James over and over again? Self-seeking, not obeying the truth, but obeying unrighteousness. In the day of judgment, there will be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, whether Jewish or Gentile. Jew or Gentile.

There is no partiality with God. He's not gonna favor the Jews. He's not gonna unduly judge the Gentiles.

Each one will be judged on what they have done. There will be glory, honor and peace to everyone who works what is good. To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

God will reward with glory, honor and peace those who work what is good, Jew first and also the Greek. There is no partiality with God. And he goes on to talk about conscience there.

So that is James chapter five, the introduction there. And you heap up treasure for yourself. This is not good treasure.

This is bad treasure in the last days, treasuring up indignation, wrath and judgment. The wages of laborers who mowed your fields that you kept back by fraud cry out. This harks back to the blood of Abel crying out from the ground at the injustice done by his brother Cain, who slew him in an emotional fit.

You've lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury. You have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You've condemned, you've murdered the just.

He does not resist you. You think of the rich man in Lazarus, Luke chapter 16 and so on. Therefore, verse seven, and this is labeled after that first six verses labeled fate of rich oppressors.

Verse seven, patience, patience. This goes back to chapter one, verses three and four. Testing of your faith produces patience.

Let that patience have its mature work, its complete and perfect work so that you can be mature and complete, lacking nothing. Therefore be patient, brethren. He's come all the way back to the beginning.

This is why you need patience. Be patient until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and the latter rain.

You also be patient. I've got these underlined in my Bible. Patience in verse seven, twice.

Patience in verse eight. Patience in verse 10. Be patient, establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

He's mentioned patience three times and the coming of the Lord twice. Be patient. How are you patient? Remember the coming of the Lord.

Let patience have its perfect work. Endure testing, endure temptation, endure hardship. If you know to do what is good, do it.

The coming of the Lord is the motivation. This is our hope. Faith is the means, hope is the motivation and love is the measure.

And your triple threat, your triple play of Christian virtues. Hope is the motivation. Be patient until the coming of the Lord.

That sustains us. We know he's coming and he's coming soon. You also be patient, verse eight.

Establish your hearts. The coming of the Lord is at hand. So in that light, now I can avoid sins of the tongue.

All of that that we have reviewed in the first session in terms of bridling the tongue. It began back in the earlier chapter in 126, bridle the tongue. We put bits in horses mouths.

We need to put a bit in our own mouth. If you can bridle the tongue, you can bring the whole body into subjection. That was 126.

It was chapter two. There'd be a whole beginning portion there. And therefore in verse 10 of chapter five, brethren, take the profits.

Don't grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned, lest you be judged. The judge is standing at the door. This is now the third reference to the coming of the Lord.

Three references to patience. Three references to the coming of the Lord. Do not grumble against one another, brethren.

Don't let your tongue become unbridled. My brethren, notice how he says my brethren in verse seven. He says brethren in verse nine.

He says brethren in verse 10. We're not looking out the window at the rich oppressors and the evil boasters anymore. This is us, this is now.

My brethren, take the profits who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and patience. The fourth mention of patience. What is James' goal in communicating all of this? To remind us of the gift of God, his wisdom that creates in us patience, which leads to purity and peace, self-control, able to resist the devil, able to resist what is earthly and sensual and demonic.

Patience. Let patience have its perfect work. Be patient.

This is an expression of faith and that faith manifests itself in works while we are waiting. We bridle our tongue while we are waiting. We look to the prophets as our example.

They spoke in the name of the Lord and they are an example of both suffering and patience. Clear back to chapter one. You can't miss it, suffering and patience.

That was chapter one. That's how he got started here. And now he's starting to wrap up.

Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord, that the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Job was more blessed at the end than he was at the beginning.

He was patient. He is in the dictionary next to the word patience. If we had a picture of Job, that's

where they would put it.

The patience of Job is legendary. The Lord is very compassionate and merciful, but above all my brethren, and this is where we were gonna pick up this coming Wednesday, and we're gonna conclude our James study this coming Wednesday. This is where we pick up.

Why does he say, above all my brethren, do not swear? Seems like a left turn to me in this context. Above all my brethren, do not swear. What's he talking about? You've seen the value of our review up to this point and the weaving of these themes together.

For your homework between now and Wednesday, see if you can find the antecedents and the thread that James is picking up and resuming and emphasizing here in verse 12. Above all my brethren. Above all? Of all of the things that he has said that are so critically important, this is above all.

Why? We'll look at it next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for this book. This is such a valuable exhortation for us. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will remind us of it, give us clarity, give us focus, give us vision in our own lives to put these things into practice, knowing that as we do so, we exhibit patience, we prepare ourselves for the return of the Lord Jesus, and we reflect his glory and yours now and in the ages to come.

We thank you, and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.