

James 26-09-23b

We continue and we'll conclude our study in James here and one of the features of this book, it is manifestly early in the church age that these points are made. There is essentially no reference made to the Holy Spirit, it is a new thing and it is going to be the Apostle Paul that is going to elaborate and communicate so much of the importance of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus to enable them and empower them for their apostolic function and you remember this in Jesus' commission to them, both in the end of the Gospels and the first chapter of Acts.

You see this special presence of the Holy Spirit and I think in the earliest days the Apostles thought that that was going to be his primary function is to enable their remembering, communicating, and fulfilling these exhortations from the Lord Jesus and we find out later that there is much more to that than first meets the eye. But what is surprising is if you operate on the assumption, it is an assumption on my part, but I think a great one, that James, the son of Zebedee, brother of John, is the author and that he sat under the teaching of the Lord Jesus and this book reflects what he learned and what he internalized, thought about, and then expresses in his own way and in his own terms. And there are so many exhortations and imperatives in this book, as we have seen, that directly reflect the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

I've grouped these into sort of categories, subject matter, topics if you will, and I want to suggest them to you briefly and again if you just want to put the title and then the verse references, that will be enough. That's about all you'll have time to write down because there's quite a bit. You can flesh out your notes from what is posted with this lesson on the website.

I'll be sure that all of this material is in the outline or available as a handout. But themes that we have seen across the five chapters of this letter. Number one, obviously, trials, endurance or patience, the hupomone, to bear up under whatever the pressure is.

It can be physical, it can be relational, it can be financial, it can be circumstantial, it can be opposition from the world, the flesh, or the devil. All of these things constitute trials that require endurance. That endurance is sourced in and comes from the wisdom of God.

And we turn to Him in faith and in dependence. Remember the exhortation in verse 2 of chapter 1, count it all joy when you encounter these hardships. That's an exhortation, it's an imperative.

This is what you should do. What should we do? What does James say we should do? Verse 2 of chapter 1, count it all joy in trial. Verse 4, let endurance, let patience, have its perfect work.

This is a conscious act of obedience on our part. Be patient and watch for and encourage the work that patience is going to do to make us perfect and complete. Not lacking anything in terms of coping, provision, strength, guidance.

Verse 5, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. Count it joy, focus on patience, let it do its job. Ask for wisdom.

Verse 6, let him ask. Verse 5 says what to ask for. Verse 6 says how to ask.

Let him ask in faith, no doubting. Verse 7, don't suppose if you ask improperly, wrong content, wrong way, that you're going to receive anything. This is a negative command.

Don't assume any old prayer is going to get the job done. We need to pay attention to content and format the way that we ask, what we ask for, or we will not receive. Don't assume.

Don't suppose you'll receive anything if you ask improperly. And on the other side of the chiasm, on the other side of the symmetry, remember chapter 5, verse 7, be patient unto the coming of the Lord, unto, ace, with a view toward. Our patience is fueled by that expectant hope, confident realization that the Lord is not far off.

So these, these group at the outside of this symmetrical structure. So 5, 7, be patient unto the coming of the Lord. 5, 8, again same word, macrothumia, but it's the verb form, be patient.

Also, again in verse 8, establish, strengthen your hearts. We know from the rest of the book how we strengthen our heart, but it's an imperative in verse 8, be patient and establish your heart. Verse 10, take the profits, don't keep looking at your hardship, look at others who have been in need of patience and expressed patience.

Take the profits as an example of suffering and patience. Ties so beautifully together. That's category number one, trials, endurance, wisdom, dependence upon God.

Chapter 1, verse 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7, and chapter 5, verse 7, 8, 8, and 10. Secondly, the theme of temptation, of deception, whether or not we receive the word and do it. So in chapter 1, verse 13, let no one say, God is the source of my problems.

113, let no one say, it's a negative exhortation. 116 is the second one, it's also a negative exhortation. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Don't say, don't believe what's false, don't be deceived. 121, chapter 1, verse 21, receive with humility the implanted word, which is able to deliver your souls. Receive, it's an imperative.

The next verse, 122, become, be doers of the word. Receive it with humility and apply it. This is symmetrical in chapter 2 with, in verse 12, so speak and so do.

Recognizing that God's law of liberty, law of freedom, you'll know the truth and the truth will set you free. So speak and so act as those who will be judged, looking to the Lord. Be patient unto the coming of the Lord.

Think about the coming and be ready to be judged at that point and not be worried. So speak and so do. Chapter 2, verse 12, those are two separate imperatives.

And finally, chapter 3, verse 13, let the wise person show his works by good conduct in the humility of wisdom, the meekness of wisdom. And along with that, also in verse 21, receive with meekness the implanted word. Remember, there was an heiress participle there, having put away filthiness.

Got to get squared away, confess sin, acknowledge wrongdoing, whether we confess it to God, if we've sinned against someone. Chapter 5, confess that fault to the person you injured. That's temptation, deception, receiving and doing the word.

That's the second category. Number three, this recurring theme of the rich and the poor, what it means to recognize status, partiality versus impartiality, and the well bucket analogy, one rising as the other falls, the great reversal, if you will. So chapter 1, verse 9, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation.

Chapter 2, verse 1, don't hold the faith of the Lord Jesus with partiality. Chapter 2, verse 5, listen, my beloved brothers, God has chosen the poor. Before you start telling the poor guy with his ragged clothes to sit somewhere else in favor of the rich guy, listen, God has chosen the poor, hasn't he? And this is symmetrical, chapter 5, verse 1, come now, you rich, weep over the miseries that are coming upon you.

And all of this centers on chapter 2, verse 8, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So you can see a sequence there in chapter 1, verse 9, let the lowly boast. Chapter 2, verse 1, do not favor the rich.

Chapter 2, verse 5, listen, God has chosen the poor. 2, verse 8, love your neighbor. So you can look at 1, 9, 2, 1, 2, 5, and 2, 8, and see this progress, James unfolding this concept.

The lowly should glory in his poverty. We shouldn't favor the rich as though they have something special going on. God has chosen the poor in verse 5, love your neighbor in verse 8. And remember in faith, the merit of faith is in the object.

Faith is as good as what you are believing in. The merit of love is in the subject. We love because he first loved us and God's love is sourced in the infinitely righteous character of God himself.

And as we lay hold of his righteousness, we can love as God loves, objectively sourced in our own integrity, not the merits of the person being loved. I don't have to find something lovable. I can operate with principles and a policy of genuine love, brotherly love, one another love because of what God has created in my soul.

And it is a love that is sourced in divine love and power. That's number three. Number four, this

theme, this group of topics on hearing, speaking, teaching, boasting, slander, grumbling, and taking oaths.

Operations of the tongue might be the overarching concept here for this fourth area. Again, hearing, speech, teaching, boasting, slander, grumbling, and taking oaths. So chapter one, verse 19, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak.

That was really our introductory passage for this whole complex. Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Put water on that anger before it gets out of control.

Chapter three, verse one, let not many of you become teachers. Do not become many teachers is another way to translate that. Knowing teachers receive greater judgment.

3.14, do not boast. And in that same verse, do not lie against the truth. Lying against the truth, you're judging the law.

So 1.19, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. 3.1, don't decide that you're going to be the guiding light and source of all wisdom. There shouldn't be many teachers.

3.14, do not boast. 3.14, do not lie against the truth. Chapter four, verse 11, do not speak against one another.

4.11, don't speak against one another. Chapter five, verse nine, do not grumble against one another. As you look at this list, these are easy things to check.

We can write these on a single sheet of paper and do a self-check. We should judge ourselves to see if we are in the faith. If we judge ourselves, we won't be judged.

Instead of judging others, instead of trying to judge God with his unfairness at giving us difficulties, judge ourselves. And here's the checklist. So hearing, speech, teaching, boasting, slander, grumbling, and oaths.

We're down to 5.9, do not grumble against one another. 5.12, do not swear. Your words should not need reinforcement with oaths.

If you have to do that, you're not going to convince anyone anyway. They'll already be aware of your shallow character and your lack of commitment to what you say. And also in that verse 5.12, let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Once again, we've got an extra little passage. Chapter one, verse 19, you know this, this you know. Let everyone be quick to hear.

The fifth category, this is the humility category. Submission to God, repentance, purification, humility. We cannot be submissive, we cannot be repentant, and we cannot be purified if we are not humble.

Humility is the key. And chapter four, just four verses, condense this truth. Chapter four, verse seven, submit yourselves to God.

Part of that is resisting the devil. In the same verse, submit yourselves to God, resist the devil. It's a choice.

We saw this in the revelation. There are two great spiritual capital cities. You can be heading for the new Jerusalem, or you can be a citizen of Babylon.

We are told, flee Babylon. Babylon will be destroyed, and great will be the fall of it. So, submit yourselves to God and resist the devil.

Head for Jerusalem, not Babylon. Chapter four, verse eight, draw near to God. These are imperatives.

Submit to God, resist the devil. Four eight, draw near to God. Four eight, cleanse your hands.

Four eight, purify your hearts. In order to do this, there needs to be recognition. So, chapter four, verse nine, be miserable.

Recognize your wretchedness. If you're not currently on this path, be miserable, mourn, and weep. Three different imperatives in verse nine.

And then a fourth, let your laughter be turned to mourning, and let your joy be turned to gloom. This is what we affectionately call godly sorrow. There's nothing wrong with feeling bad about our failure.

We are encouraged to do so as a part of recognition, as a part of change of mind. And then chapter four, verse 10, humble yourselves before the Lord. It's almost a chiasm there.

Four seven through four ten. Four seven, submit yourself to God. Four ten, humble yourself before the Lord.

He'll lift you up. Ten imperatives in four verses. It's amazing.

And in that cluster, you have that same idea of Daisukoi, of double soul, double-minded. In chapter one, verses six through eight, ask in faith, nothing doubting, or you'll be a Daisukos. And in chapter four, verses seven and eight, submit and draw near.

Don't be Daisukos. Same thing. So, you can put one six through eight with four seven and eight.

You can put one nine next to four ten. He picks that thread back up and develops it even further. The sixth area, this is six of seven.

I've grouped these into seven because it's a great number. Number six, human plans and submission to God's will. You know where this is coming from in chapter four.

Come now, you who say, in chapter four, verse 13, today or tomorrow we will go. But the exhortation in verse 15 is, instead of saying, today or tomorrow we will go, we will make a profit, we will stay a year, we've got it all figured out, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. Instead of my agenda, it's God's agenda.

What is the Lord's will? Not my will, but thine be done. Finally, the seventh topic, you could label this proper use of the tongue, prayer, praise, healing, confession, restoration. Prayer, praise, healing, confession, restoration.

The tongue is a fire that can start small and set an entire forest ablaze, or it can be a source of healing, of unification, of purification. What's it going to be? It's our choice. So we saw this in chapter five, just in the first session, verses 13 through 20.

Verse 13, is anyone suffering? Let him pray. Verse 13, is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Verse 14, is anyone sick? Let him call for the mature believers in the church.

Noted here as elders, but those believers who know what's going on. Verse 14, let them pray over him. Intercessory prayer, believers praying for one another, what a privilege.

Verse 16, confess your sins against one another to one another. Not any old sin that traverses the empty landscape, the cloudless sky of your brain. It is meaningful if we injure someone to say, I recognize that I did that.

I am sorry. Let's pray together. Let's look for God's grace, for healing of our relationship, healing of the injury, healing of the wound that we have dealt out.

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another. Notice the one another's there. This whole area of sin, confession and prayer is in a one another context.

Not just, let me tell you what I thought about some pretty girl that walked by or whatever else people stand. You can't believe the stories. When I was in seminary, we had a whole collection of stories of people that stood up trying to confess sins that had nothing to do with the group, split the church, fragmented congregations, got pastors fired.

There's no end of grief, harm and chaos that will ensue when people just start spreading sin verbally in a congregation. That is not what this verse means. Look at the context, one another.

It's between you and me. It's between this small, intimate area where sin has occurred. And then finally in verse 20, let him know the one who has reached the point.

This is the culmination of the book. You are so good at humility, at communion with God, dwelling

in, exercising and expressing the wisdom that is from above, that is peaceful, that sows the seeds of righteousness and bears the fruit of righteousness, that you are among the elders. You are among those who is qualified to speak in gentleness and tactfulness to someone and encourage them out of a sinful path.

Let that person know that if you have managed to turn a sinner from the error of the way, you have delivered a soul from death and entered that person into the realm of forgiveness of sin, covering a multitude of sins. What a privilege not to be rushed into in bull in china shop fashion. This is something, it's the culmination of this book.

If you have come to understand and can live this truth and master this truth, bridle the tongue, bring the whole body into subjection, be a blessing to the entire group, you may reach the point where God can use you to turn a sinner from the error of their way and cover a multitude of sins, save their soul from death. This is spiritual death, fruitlessness, wasting the time instead of redeeming it. So, those are the groups of imperatives.

This is what I find fascinating. Each of these are reflections and retellings and rehearsals of the teaching of the Lord Jesus himself. So, for example, in category one, trials, endurance, wisdom, going to God and requesting mercy and grace to help in time of need.

James says, count it all joy when you encounter trials in chapter one, verse two, Jesus says in Matthew five, 11 and 12, rejoice and be glad when you are persecuted. James picks this up again in chapter five, verse 10, take the prophets as an example of suffering and patience. Matthew chapter five, verse 12, rejoice, this is what happened to the prophets who were before you.

The example of the prophets, look to it when patience is needed in a time of suffering, Jesus taught that, James picked it up. In James one, five and six, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. You know where this comes from, Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter seven, five, six and seven are the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and paralleled in Mark 11, 23 and 24.

James says, let him ask of God. Jesus says, ask and it will be given you. Mark, his language in 11, 23 and 24 is even closer.

Mark quotes Jesus saying, let him ask without doubting, nothing doubting. What a close parallel, Mark 11, 23, the one who does not doubt in his heart, but believes. Secondly, hearers need to be doers.

James one, 22, become doers of the word and not hearers only. What is the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew seven, 24, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them, it's like a man who builds his house on the rock. Matthew seven, 26, everyone who hears and does not do them, builds his house on the sand.

Hear my words and do them. You can also imagine that there is an echo in chapter one, verse 21

of James, receive with humility, the implanted word and the seed and word imagery you find in Jesus' parable of the soils in Mark chapter four, verse 20. Those who hear the word and receive it.

It's implanted in the soil and it bears fruit 30 fold, 60 fold, a hundred fold. Receive the word and do the word, James one, 21 and 22. The third area, the poor and the rich.

James said, did not God choose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? Again, has God not chosen the poor of this world to be what? Rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. Heirs of the kingdom. What did Jesus say in Luke chapter six, verse 20, blessed are you poor because yours is the kingdom of God.

End of chapter five in Matthew, the beatitudes, blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. James chapter five, verse one says, come now you rich weep.

Luke six, 24 and 25, woe to you who are rich. Woe to you who laugh now because you will mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning.

In James chapter four, verse nine, mourn and weep. Jesus said, woe to you who laugh now, you will mourn and weep in Luke six, 24 and 25. Same verbs, penthesate and clausate.

If you want to know the Greek, they are the same words in James as in Luke six. You will mourn and weep. Blessed are the poor versus woe to the rich.

Number four, speech, judgment, oaths, use of the tongue. James chapter five, verse 12, we just saw it. Do not swear and let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Jesus says in Matthew five, 34 through 37, do not swear at all. Let your word be yes, yes and no, no. Doesn't get much closer than that.

You have to believe James was there, heard the Lord Jesus teach this, remembered it and is now teaching as Jesus commanded. The things that I've commanded you to teach as you go, make disciples, teaching them to observe the things that I've commanded. These are in the imperative sections.

So Jesus says again, Matthew five, 34 through 37, put it next to James five, 12. It's almost a direct quote. Do not swear, let your yes be yes and your no be no.

James four, 11 and 12, do not speak against one another. And he connects it with judging. Who are you who judges your neighbor? Jesus says in Matthew chapter seven, verse one, do not judge lest you be judged.

James chapter five, verse nine, do not grumble and complain against one another. Jesus in John chapter six, verse 43, do not grumble among yourselves. James emphasizes bridling the tongue,

controlling our speech.

Jesus says in Matthew 12, 36 and 37, people will give an account for every careless word. By one's words, one will be justified. By one's words, they will be condemned.

Matthew 12, 36 and 37. How important is it to bridle our tongue? The fifth category, the imperatives in James four, seven through 10, submit to God, resist the devil, draw near to God, cleanse your hands, purify your hearts, mourn, weep, humble yourselves. Remember that? We've got it written down up in the fifth category.

James four, eight, purify your hearts. Jesus says in Matthew five, eight, in the Beatitudes, remember five, six, and seven are the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew five, eight, blessed are the pure in heart.

If the pure in heart are blessed, James says, purify your heart. You want to be the blessed. James four, nine, mourn and weep.

Luke six, 25, mourn and weep. We saw this up above. James four, 10, humble yourselves and he will exalt you.

Matthew 23, verse 12, whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Once you start looking at the parallels between this early message to the church from James, it is rich. The teaching of the Lord Jesus is embedded, but you can tell that James has thought about it.

He's expressing it in his own way and in his own words under the ministry of the Spirit. But it is such a beautiful reminder and review of so many essential teachings by the Lord Jesus himself. Those who say they want the Jesus hermeneutic, I say, read James.

So again, James four, 10, humble yourselves and he will exalt you. Jesus, Matthew 23, 12, whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Same thing in Luke 14, 11, the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

The same thing in Luke 18, verse 14, identical. The one who humbles himself will be exalted. You wonder how many times Jesus taught this? How many times James heard it? It's a part of his message.

And this antithesis between exaltation and humbling is what we first saw in James one, nine, and 10. The lowly can exalt. Those who are exalted are going to become lowly.

The sixth point, human planning and God's will. James 4, 13, today or tomorrow we will go into the city. We're going to trade.

We're going to make a profit. Remember the parable of the rich fool in Luke chapter 12, verses 16 through 21. Luke 12, the man that's got these barns and silos, I will tear down my barns and

build larger ones.

I will store and I will say to my soul, soul, rest in ease. God answers, fool, this night, your soul is required of you. James answers the rich he's talking to, you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

You're like a mist that is here today and vanishes away. The logic is identical. Economic prosperity, confident planning, forgetting the ephemerality of this life, the Ecclesiastes view.

We are a vapor. We should say, if the Lord wills. Same thing in Matthew chapter six, verse 10.

In the example prayer, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And again in the garden, praying to his father just before he's arrested. Matthew 26, 39, not as I will, but as you will.

So James 4, 13 can also be compared with Matthew 6, 34. Do not worry about tomorrow. Don't worry about, am I going to profit? Will my investments multiply? There's a connection there as well.

Finally, the seventh category, prayer, healing, confession, and restoration. If anyone's suffering in James 5, 13, let him pray. James 5, 16, pray for one another.

Jesus in Matthew 5, 44, sometimes people are the source of the problem. And he says, pray for those who persecute you. There is an extended instruction, the Lord's prayer in 6, 5 through 13, forgive those who sin against us, even as we are forgiven by God.

And this idea of confessing faults one to another, being forgiven. So confidence in prayer and a prayer for forgiveness from God, and then praying for healing and forgiveness in our midst. Restoration of a wandering brother, as it were, James 5, 19 and 20.

Someone wanders from the truth. Someone turns him back. You think about Matthew 18, parable of the lost sheep.

The Lord Jesus went out and came back with that lamb on his shoulder. And there was celebration. There is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents.

Matthew 18, verse 15, if your brother sins, go to him. If he listens, you have gained your brother. Very close connection of concepts there.

So this is a distillation of divine truth. First heard from the lips of the Lord Jesus himself, incorporated into the teaching of James. We could do a similar study of the connections to Paul, if we had time, but we've noticed those as we went through the book.

But I hope this study in the book of James has been as meaningful for you as it has been for me, and that we will remember it. We can review it. We can cultivate the humility, the divine wisdom that makes for peace and sows the seeds of peace and enables us to bridle our tongues, to pray

properly, to speak to one another properly, to talk about the world properly, and to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you so much for this wonderful missive of divine truth delivered to us. So profitable, so practical.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will use it to mature us, to humble us, and to enable us to truly live in its light so that we can reflect your glory and the glory of our Savior. We ask it in his name. Amen.