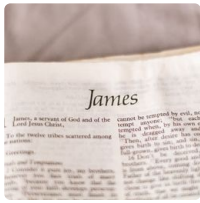


# OpenTheo

## James 1:9 - 2:7



### James - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the danger of pursuing riches as a Christian and emphasizes the importance of being slow to speak and slow to anger. He explains how temptation is a test of love and warns against the deception of sin. Gregg also delves into the importance of hearing and doing the word of God, laying aside filthiness and wickedness, and demonstrating genuine love by loving one's neighbor as oneself.

## Transcript

Okay, we're turning to James chapter 1 and verse 9 to begin where we left off last time. James chapter 1 and verse 9. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with the burning heat than it withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes.

So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. Now, here we have the first time that James addresses the matter of poverty and riches. He does so frequently in the book of James.

At least three other passages besides this one focus on the issue of the rich and the poor. And, of course, the New Testament gives just the reverse of what the world normally thinks about these matters. The person who is rich and comfortable and secure in this world is usually considered to be the one who is blessed and enviable.

Whereas the one who is poor is considered to be the one who is not getting a fair deal and is oppressed. Some in the Jewish religion would have believed that they were under God's curse because they were not being blessed with prosperity. And yet Jesus came and taught just the opposite.

He said, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. And woe unto you rich, for you have your consolation now. He said that in Luke chapter 6. Luke 6 verses 20 and 24.

Now that is, in fact, Luke's version of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, which we

usually turn to Matthew for. But in Luke chapter 6 verse 20 he actually said, Blessed are the poor. In Matthew's Gospel we have it, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

But Luke has Jesus saying, and this may have been on a different occasion, Blessed are the poor and woe unto the rich. Now, because of that, the lowly brother, the poor brother, the one who is of a low estate in society, can glory or boast or exult in the fact that he is, in fact, exalted by his very state. Now this does not mean that rich people are always bad and under God's curse, and poor people are always good under God's blessing.

Because there are wicked poor. There are going to be poor people who go to hell. And there are going to be rich people who go to heaven.

There are righteous rich and unrighteous poor. But the Bible treats riches as a stumbling block and a burden, and something which a man can scarcely get into the kingdom with. It's harder for that to happen than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, Jesus said.

And so whenever it does happen, it's an unusual miracle, just as we would expect it to be. We would call it an unusual miracle if a camel got through the eye of a needle. Jesus said that's more likely to happen than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

It's easier for that to happen. Now, everything's possible with God. And therefore, God can, and I believe has, save men who are rich.

But the Bible does not teach that riches are an advantage to the Christian. Certainly, if anything, a disadvantage. They're a distraction.

They make a man comfortable in this world. They make him forget his vulnerability and his need to rely on God. The poor man, however, is easily kept in touch with those realities, with the fact that he needs God.

The man who has nothing in the bank has to trust God on a daily basis. The man with money in the bank may choose to trust God on a daily basis, but it's hard for him to have the kind of immediacy and urgency about the way he trusts God for finances when he knows that he has the money. He doesn't need God, really, to come through for him anywhere near his office.

That doesn't prevent, always, a person from being a Christian or even from being a good one. But, as James says later on in chapter 2, that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. Because the person who is poor is more likely to trust because he has to trust God.

The man who is rich is not as likely to trust because he doesn't feel the need to trust

quite in the same way. So, the poor should rejoice in this exalted status that he enjoys in the teaching of Christ, in the new system of values that Christ has introduced. That the man is rich in faith, though he's poor in his life, and that is a riches to glory, and that's a riches to be happy about.

Now, the rich man, in verse 10, is supposed to rejoice in his humiliation, which probably means he is to be glad when he is humiliated, when he is brought low, perhaps when he loses his riches, perhaps when he gives them away and he humbles himself. Now, by taking on himself in the form of a poor person, that's what Jesus did, though he existed in the form of God, and taught equality with God not to be a thing to be grasped, yet he emptied himself and took on himself in the form of a servant. Many early believers were required to do this.

When they were rich and they became Christians, as we saw in the book of Acts, they pretty much liquidated their goods and gave them for the sake of the poor. And they were made low. And that is okay.

That's good, in fact. The rich man should be glad when he's made low, because in being humiliated or being brought low, he is made to enjoy that status that the poor man knows, which is to be rich in faith. Now, it's possible that he doesn't picture here the rich losing his money when he says, let the rich rejoice in his humiliation.

It might just be that his state of being rich is a humbling state to be in with reference to the church, because the church did not honor rich men, it honored poor men. And therefore, in the new society of believers, the rich man, by being rich, is in fact humiliated. Because he doesn't, you know, he's always, people are always wondering about his dedication and so forth.

When people are selling their properties and giving them to the poor, and this is the standard thing, the man who has riches is always the one who's maybe looked down on a bit. And there are certainly Christians in our day who look down on men who have money. I myself have to admit, there are some Christians whose extravagance of their lives stumbles me a bit.

Although that doesn't mean that I think everybody who has a lot of money is a good Christian. The way they spend their money is much more an indicator of what kind of steward they are. But whether he means that the rich man is humiliated by being rich in the company of the saints, he's not really an exalted person at all, as he is in the world.

Or whether it means he is brought low by the hand of God or by a voluntary act of humbling himself and giving away what he has, he should nonetheless rejoice in that. And he should be glad when he is brought low like that, because that will remind him of his mortality, something that rich people often don't think about as often, as people who have to face poverty and maybe even starvation on a regular basis. They have to think

about the next life and not just this life.

The riches of this world and the comforts of this life have such a way of distracting us from consideration of preparing for the next life. Jesus told of a seed that fell among thorns, and the thorns choked out the seed and it bore no fruit. And he said this is those who, when they receive the word, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches spring up and choke out the word, and their Christian life fails because of the distractions of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.

Now, the man who is rich but brought low, either voluntarily or by God's doing, is fortunate and should exult in that being brought low, because that will remind him of his mortality, that he is like a flower of a field that passes away. This also seems to allude to the Sermon on the Mount, because Jesus talked about not worrying about tomorrow. In these words, in Matthew chapter 6, verses 27 or 28 and 30, he said, so why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.

They neither toil nor spin. And yet I say to you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today he is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So he talks about the grass of the field and the flowers of the field, which are so temporal.

They appear today and are gone tomorrow. So is the rich man, whether he realizes it or not. And he is more benefited by circumstances that cause him to realize that.

The loss of his riches may be the thing that will help him to remember that he is vulnerable and in need of God as much as others. For going on to talk about how the flower of the field is transient, in verse 11, for no sooner has the sun risen with the burning heat than it withers the grass, its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

So the rich man, though he seems the most secure of all men on the earth, is no more secure than any other with reference to the fadingness, the passing nature of the human life and mortality and so forth. This idea of man being like grass comes up from time to time in the Bible. I believe in the Old Testament, I think in Isaiah chapter 40, it first is mentioned.

In fact, let me just take a look. I wonder if I'm thinking of the right place. Yeah, it's Isaiah chapter 40.

He says in Isaiah 40 and verse 6, a voice said, cry out. And he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades.

Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it, surely the people are grass. The grass

withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. So we have here, obviously, the imagery for which James borrows.

By the way, Peter borrows from it also, this passage in Isaiah chapter 40. Over in 1 Peter 1.24, we see this concept in 1 Peter, works its way into the writings of a number of New Testament writers. In fact, he actually quotes Isaiah 40 in 1 Peter 1.24. It says, because all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man is the flower of the grass.

The grass withers and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. So that's the quote from Isaiah 40, the same idea as James is telling us here. Though James isn't actually quoting, he's just saying the same thing, but no doubt influenced by that imagery from Isaiah.

Verse 12, James 1.12, Blessed is the man who endures temptation. For when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and entices. Then when desire has conceived, it brings to birth sin.

And sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. It comes down from the Father of life, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures, of his creation. Now, a blessing, a beatitude is pronounced upon the person who endures temptation. Like the Sermon on the Mount, which has a number of beatitudes.

James introduces a beatitude, though this one isn't exactly like any of the ones in the Sermon on the Mount. It certainly does, in the Sermon on the Mount, it does pronounce a blessing on those who suffer for righteousness sake. Now this word temptation in verse 12 is the same Greek word that was used back in verse 2. And transmitted trials.

Verse 2, my brethren, how I'll join when you fall into various trials. The same word in the Greek, trials and temptations here. In fact, it's, I think that in the King James it's translated as temptations in both places.

The word, however, can be translated either way. It is a word that means to put to the test. To try the metal of some light or of something.

And sometimes we are thinking in terms of simply God putting a man to the test like Abraham. It says the Lord tested Abraham when he told him to offer Isaac his son on the altar. In Genesis, I think it's verse 22, verse 1, chapter 22, verse 1, I think it is.

Where he says that he tested Abraham. It says in Proverbs that God puts men to the test. The fine plot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the souls of men.

And so God does put people to the test. And some kinds of testing of our soul is in the form of temptation, what we call temptation. That is where the devil tempts us to do something wrong.

We know that Job, for example, was being tempted to curse God and die. And so these trials came upon him. They were from God, but they were also from the devil.

In fact, it would not be proper to say that he was being tempted by God, although God was allowing it. It says don't let anyone say when he's tempted, I'm tempted by God. Now, perhaps what he means by this is we can't blame God for the appeal that sin has to our flesh.

Our temptation appeals to something in us. We can't even blame the devil in the final analysis. Notice he doesn't say don't let anyone say when he's tempted, I'm tempted by God, but let them acknowledge we're tempted by the devil.

He doesn't mention the devil at all in this particular paragraph. He mentions that we're drawn away, we're tempted when we're drawn away by our own desires. And this shows that in the temptation, there is, the devil, of course, is involved.

And the world is involved, too. But the devil and the world have an ally inside of us, our flesh, our fleshly desires. And although there is, in fact, a sense in which the devil is involved in temptation, and even God is, in a way, involved, because God has to allow it or else the devil can't do it.

But really what James wants us to realize is that temptation is a trial to us because of something in us, because our own desires are attracted to the wrong thing. Now, it says in verse 12, the man who endures temptation, that would suggest, of course, not succumbing. The person who endures the temptation will, it is blessed, blessed of God.

And it says, he will receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Now, one may begin to wonder, where did God promise a crown of life to those who love him? I don't know of any place in the Gospels where the crown of life is referred to. There is a reference and a promise from Jesus in Revelation chapter 2, in verse 10, which is given to the persecuted church of Smyrna, who are facing severe hardship and persecution.

And he told them in Revelation 2.10, Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. As far as I know, that's the only place in the Bible where God promises the crown of life to those who love him. And that's in fact something that James refers to, God has promised this.

So maybe he's actually familiar with the book of Revelation. This would raise questions about the date of the book of Revelation and the date of James. Because the book of Revelation was either written last of all the books of the Bible, as some people think, or else it may have been written quite early, before 70 AD, which is another theory held by many, but probably not very much before 70 AD.

And if James was familiar with Revelation, then James would presumably be later still than Revelation. Yes? Except that they're both the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit knows both.

But James is saying to his readers that the Lord has promised. Now maybe he means, God has spoken to me about a promise to this nature, and I'm passing it on to you. God has promised you, you know, who love him, the crown of life.

That's possible. Although, yeah, that's possible. Although it seems more like he's saying there's some known promise made that those who love him will receive the crown of life.

And that is a specific promise made to the Church of Smyrna in Revelation 2.10. But again, the Holy Spirit is the inspirer of both documents. It's not necessary that James knew of Revelation. And if he did, that, like I said, raises serious questions about the date of Revelation and the date of James, because it would seem that Revelation was written before James, if that were the case.

A crown of life. Now the crown of life probably just refers to eternal life. And those who make it through their life enduring the temptations that are in them and do not succumb to them, will experience, will be crowned with eternal life.

Jesus said in Matthew 24, he said, He that endures to the end shall be saved. And that's the word that James is hearing. He that endures temptation.

Matthew 24. I'll find verse number 40. I'm a little tempted to go searching for it.

Verse 13. Matthew 24, verse 13. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

So the crown of life is probably just salvation. Being crowned with eternal life, if you endure to the end. Now it says, For when he has been proved.

Verse 12. Blessed is the man who endures temptation. For when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life.

That apparently is his whole life, his proving time. This life is not what it's all about. This life is simply probationary.

This life is a proving time, a testing time. To see who will endure, who will be faithful to God. And once this is over, it will seem so short.

In contrast to eternity. The crown of life at the end is what we're striving for. And we must be prepared to endure every hardship without succumbing to temptation.

In order to obtain that crown. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. Verses 24 through 27. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run but only one receives the prize.

Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is self-controlled in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown.

But we do it for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection. Lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. So Paul says even though I've preached to others and been a good Christian.

I could be disqualified if I don't fight the good fight. If I don't run the good race. Of course at the end of his life he said he had fought the good fight.

He had run the good race. At this point though earlier in his life. He says this is why I'm running.

I'm boxing. I'm fighting. And the reason is because there is an imperishable crown for me if I win this match.

Now those who run in the Olympic games received a wreath made out of leaves. A perishable crown. And he says yet look how much self-discipline they bring to the task of training for those games.

Yet they do it for a fading crown. How much more should we be motivated to bring the same kind of self-control. The same kind of self-discipline to the task of obtaining a crown that is set before us.

Which is at the end of his life. If we do not be disqualified in the race. If we do not back away.

If we do not fall to the temptation. Then there is a crown. An imperishable crown which James calls the crown of life.

Which the Lord has promised those who love him. The temptation is the proof of your love. The crown is for those who love him.

James 1.12 says. The crown is for those who love him. This is given to those who have been proved.

That is their love for him has been proven. Temptation is therefore a proof or a test of



your love. And if you do endure temptation and do not succumb.

You prove yourself to be one of those who loves him. Remember Deuteronomy 13. Where Moses warned them about false prophets.

And said if there arise a prophet or a dreamer of dreaming. And he gives you a sign or a wonder. These are the first three verses of Deuteronomy 13.

And the sign or wonder that he gives you comes to pass. By which he says let us go and worship other gods. Which you have not known and which you have not served.

He says do not follow that prophet. Do not believe that prophet. For the Lord your God is testing you.

To see if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 13.1-3. Interesting. God allows there to be temptations.

And false prophets and so forth to test you. To see if you love him. But if you endure the test.

Once you have been proven. You can lay claim to the crown of life. Which is promised to those who love him.

Now in verse 13 and 14. And actually 15. Those three verses talk about the mechanics of temptation.

If you are tempted don't blame God for it. Now he is not saying that God is no more involved. The Bible indicates in fact that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness.

To be tempted by the devil. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into a situation where he would be tempted by the devil. It was God who allowed Satan to come and bring the temptations to Joel.

Again it was Satan who brought them. It was God however who sent them. Now the fact that God allows it doesn't mean that God is responsible for your attraction to sin.

He allows you to live in a world where there are temptations. He allows there to be a devil to test you. But none of those things really can put the blame on God if you succumb to temptation.

You are drawn away and enticed by your own desires. Now it says of God in verse 13. He cannot be tempted by evil.

Nor does he tempt any man. Now although the word tempt there means put to the test. We have to understand that God doesn't tempt in the sense that he doesn't tempt with evil.

It says in the clause just before the statement that God doesn't tempt. The previous clause says he cannot be tempted with evil. Neither does he tempt any man with evil as implied.

God does tempt. God does put to the test. He did that to Abraham.

He does it to others. But he never tempts you to do evil. God is not the one who wants you to do evil.

The devil wants you to do evil. You want to do evil sometimes in your own evil heart. But God doesn't want you to.

Evil is contrary to his nature. He has no attraction to it whatsoever. He can't even be tempted with it.

And so obviously he doesn't tempt other people to do it. But he misses an opportunity here to talk about the devil. He said where temptation doesn't come from and where it does come from, it seems like he should mention the devil.

He doesn't in this passage. He talks about Satan later in chapter 2 and 4 also. But here he wants to focus on the fact that temptation arises within your own heart.

It's true the devil is involved. In fact, the Bible calls Satan the tempter in 1 Thessalonians, I think, elsewhere. But it's your own heart that is attracted to the sin.

A man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire is conceived, it brings birth to sin. Now the word desire here is the same word that's translated lust in the King James Version.

And it's important to note this. It actually says in the King James, and it's a good translation, it's just that desire is a more modern English word for it. It's a Greek word.

But when lust is conceived, it gives birth or brings forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. I remember a friend of mine told me this was the LSD of temptation.

Lust, sin, and death. And lust brings forth sin, and sin brings forth death. But the interesting thing about that is that it says lust, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin.

And that shows that lust is not itself sin. Sin happens when the desires conceive, when they find a willing reception within the heart. There's a sense in which your will is being bombarded continually by impressions both good and bad.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness and draws you to God. But then there's the flesh.

The flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. They lust against each

other. And these two are contrary to each other, Paul says in Galatians 5. So that there's two sets of desires, both seeking to make their impression on the will and win the approval of the will.

And when the will says yes to a wrong desire, that's when sin takes place. Now Jesus said if any man looks at a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery in his heart. So he's obviously sinned at that point.

But he doesn't say if any man looks at a woman and lusts after her. Which is obviously something to be avoided. You don't want to look at a woman and lust after her if you don't want to commit sin in your heart.

But the point is, I know many people who have been condemned because they have experienced a sensation of lust or desire. When a person of the opposite sex says, uh oh, according to Jesus I've committed adultery in my heart. That's not always the case.

Lust has to conceive in order to bring forth sin. And desire is one thing. Saying yes or being willing to welcome that desire is another issue.

Now Jesus didn't say anyone who has lust for a woman has committed adultery. He says anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her. Which speaks to the fact that the heart intends to lust.

The heart is agreeable with the lust. The heart has already been won over. The lust has conceived already with the heart.

And it brings forth sin. But simply to have desire for evil things is not itself sin. But for it to conceive will bring forth sin.

And when lust conceives, it is when the heart, when it has won the approval of your heart. Won the approval of your will. And your will then says, yes, that's what I want, I want to sin, I want to do the wrong thing.

And sin, of course, when it's full grown, brings forth death. You don't die the moment you sin in most cases. Adam and Eve sinned, but they didn't die the same day.

Many people sin and seem to get away with it their life long. But their sin is just growing. It was birthed when lust conceived, but it grows.

It's only when it's full grown that death is the result. In the meantime, one may get the impression they're really enjoying life. And that there's no consequences for their evil deeds.

Their sins are growing. Their sins are increasing. They're strangleable above them.

And when it's full grown, it's got a strong grip. And it strangles them to death. And the

ultimate result of sin that is lived in and that is nurtured and that is allowed to be full grown is death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. By the way, temptation always includes deception. I've told you this before.

The devil, I don't think, can do anything more than deceive. I think deception is his principle and maybe his sole weapon. But he can do a great deal with deception.

If he can deceive you, if he can lie convincingly to you, he can get you to feel condemnation. He can get you to feel fear. He can get you to be angry when you need to be angry.

He can arouse every kind of wrong emotion in you by focusing your attention on what is not true rather than what is. And, of course, he can cause you to sin in sensuous ways and so forth. Why? Because basically the lie he will tell you is that sin will be more enjoyable.

And you get more out of the sin in terms of pleasure than you will out of pain or any consequences that are negative for it. The devil will always minimize the consequences of sin and deceive you. If the truth were known, I think every true Christian would say they don't enjoy sin anymore.

It doesn't mean they've never sinned, but they can't enjoy it like they used to. If you can, if you can enjoy sin as much as you used to, and you don't have this remorse, and you don't practically feel suicidal or something after your sin, I'm not saying Christians should be suicidal, but I mean anyone who loves righteousness hates sin. And while it is true that a moment of temptation succumbed to can lead a Christian to sin, yet he cannot enjoy it as before.

He cannot enjoy his sin. And yet the devil, in order to get you to sin, has to mask that factor from you. He has to hide that from you.

He's going to make you not realize that you're not going to enjoy it like before, that you'll regret it for a lot longer time than you enjoyed it. That's a deception. If you knew that you're not really going to enjoy this thing half as much as you're going to regret it later, then you wouldn't do it.

And I think that temptation from the enemy is deception. And so James says, don't be deceived in this context about temptation. Don't be deceived.

Let no one deceive you. Yes, John. Yeah, I was just going to say, I didn't quite understand when you were talking about the bus.

Uh-huh. And you're going through the boat. The thing I don't understand about it all is

that about sin in general.

You have to think, I mean, when Jesus was shown up to the cross, isn't it important that it's in your heart already? And that's the thing that needs to be eradicated. I mean. Well, I don't think that Jesus teaches that sin in your heart can be eradicated.

Okay. Wesley taught that. Didn't he just re-explain the point there? Okay.

Now, Jesus may well have desired to illustrate that there is sin in the heart of man. But I think what he wanted to do when he taught that about lusting after, looking at women to lust after, is to show that because you are sinful, you commit sins much earlier than you believe you do or than you know you do. That you may actually cut off the act and not do the act, but you may still do the sin in your heart.

And therefore you can be just as rebellious against God and just as impure and unholy by living with those kinds of fantasies as if you were acting them out. Okay. That's what I think he's saying.

I don't think he's saying that they can be eradicated, and there's no promise of that there. But what he is saying, if you look at a woman to lust after her, well, that shows where your will is, what your motive is. Your motive and your will is to commit adultery.

And he says if you do that, well, that adultery is already in your heart. You've already committed it. You've already made a choice in favor of adultery by taking that look deliberately in order to satisfy your lustful desires.

Now, what I was contrasting that to is that you may not in any sense wish to satisfy your lustful desires by dating a woman, but you may, in fact, be in situations where women are before your eyes. I mean, it's involuntary on your part. You can't leave the world.

And there's not a lot of immodesty in the world. And there may be times when the kinds of desires you hate will arise simply by some kind of visual stimulus, being in the presence of a woman who's not modest or whatever. And the fact that there is that stimulus and that it appeals to something in your flesh, it does not mean that that appeal itself is proof of sin.

That's just proof that you're temptable, that you can be tempted. But Jesus was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. And we have to assume that if he was tempted in all points, we are tempted with the desires of the flesh.

But there is a point where desire and temptation crosses over a line into sin. And that point is when lust conceives or when desire conceives. And that I think to be when your heart agrees to it, when your heart embraces it.

And when your heart embraces it, you're God. Okay? Verse 17. Every good gift and every

perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow turning.

That is, there's no turning shadow like on a sundial with God. He's always shining in the same direction. There's no shadow cast by him turning because he doesn't turn.

There's no variation with him. He doesn't move like the sun moves across the sky and causes the shadow to turn on the dial. But he is a God who just simply is always the same.

And since he is, he is always equally holy. Therefore, the gifts he sends you are things consistent with his character. This follows up on what he says, don't say I'm tempted by God.

God doesn't tempt anyone with evil. What God gives are good gifts and perfect gifts. They come down from God who is the Father of light.

And this light doesn't move, so there's no shadow cast of turning. He doesn't vary. If he's been good and holy, he'll always be good and holy.

He will not do something out of character, like send you a temptation that you can't handle so that you'll fall in sin. God doesn't want you to sin. What he does send you is a way of escape when you're tempted, it says in 1 Corinthians 10, 13.

But God takes credit for only the good gifts and the perfect gifts. Now, sin is not good and it's not perfect. Now, sometimes in discussions about sickness, there is a tendency to equate sickness and sin and to feel like sickness, therefore, can't be congratulated.

That's not a good gift, not a perfect gift either. But I don't see those in the same category. Sin is a moral issue.

Sin is something you rebel against God to do. That's a moral choice. Sin is always something that is something in your heart and something that you desire that is wrong.

Sickness is simply pain and discomfort, which you would never have chosen. It has nothing to do with what's in your heart necessarily. And therefore, it can be good.

Paul's thorn could be good. Jacob's lameness could be good. And, you know, just like persecution can be good, pain can be good.

It is good for me that I've been afflicted, the psalmist said. And Paul said when he was in prison and wrote, you know, the things that have happened to me have fallen out further and further into the gospel. That's good.

Sometimes things that feel bad can be good, but sin can never be good. And the things that come from God are not temptation to sin. Every good gift and every perfect gift

comes down from God.

Now it says in verse 18, Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Now I believe James has in mind here, particularly the Jewish Christian audience he's writing to. He addresses the epistle in chapter 1 verse 1 to the 12 tribes that are scattered abroad.

And yet, as I pointed out to you in the introduction, chapter 2 verse 1 indicates that they are Christian Jews. Christian Jews. Now in the history of the church, of course, the very first Christians were Jewish.

Not only the apostles, but the 120 in the upper room, as well as the 3,000 that were saved on the day of Pentecost, as well as the 5,000 mentioned later, as well as the many thousands more that were added before the first Gentile ever came in. There were very possibly hundreds of thousands of Jewish believers before there were any Gentile believers. We don't know the whole number because the Bible stops counting after 5,000, but still it was a goodly number of years and a great deal of revival going on in Israel and around Jerusalem.

That was going on before Cornelius was converted. And for that reason, we could say it's very safe to estimate tens of thousands and maybe hundreds of thousands of Jewish believers converted before any Christians, Gentiles were. And that means that the Jewish believers were the first fruits of this harvest.

On the day of Pentecost, which is also the Feast of First Fruits, the first fruits of the church were brought in. They were Jewish believers. And James says that God has chosen to bring forth us, the Jewish remnant, the Jewish believers, to be the first fruits of His creatures, suggesting that the rest of the harvest will include non-Christians.

This is a helpful passage when trying to understand some more difficult passages in Revelation. Because in Revelation 7, there is that obscure description of 144,000 people who were of all the tribes of Israel who received the seal of God in their foreheads. And we're told only there that in Revelation 7, 4 through 8, that there were 12,000 of the tribe of Judah, 12,000 of the tribe of Reuben and so forth, all through 12 tribes.

And we're not told who they are, except that they're Jewish people from the 12 tribes who were sealed by God. But over in chapter 14 of Revelation, they are seen again in verses 1 through 5. It says, And I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, with Him 144,000, having their fathers' names written on their foreheads, as the seal of God they had received before. And of them it says in verse 4, These are the ones, Revelation 14, 4, These are the ones who were not defiled with women for their virgins.

These are the ones who followed the Lamb wherever He goes. Disciples. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile. Same thing Jesus said about Nathanael, Here comes an Israelite indeed, and whom is no guile. For they are without fault before the throne of God.

These are Christian Jews like Nathanael, Israelites indeed. But the interesting thing he says in verse 4, with reference to our passage in James, is that it says, These are firstfruits. James said to the Jewish believers of his day, God has caused us to be a kind of a firstfruits.

Which suggests that the 144,000 in Revelation are a reference to the Jewish believers of the first century, who were the firstfruits of the church. The firstfruits unto God. I realize that various other interpretations of Revelation have identified the 144,000 as either the church in general, or the Jehovah's Witnesses, or their anointed ones, or more commonly some group of Jews in the last days who will be converted during tribulation times or whatever.

However, in view of the fact that they are distinctly said to be the firstfruits, it seems to ameliorate against seeing them as some future last days group of Jews, in view of the fact that they would then be the lastfruits, not the firstfruits of the church. Whereas James specifically indicates that the Jewish believers to whom he is writing are the firstfruits of God's creatures. Now James 119, Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Now here we have a statement that is both about speech and about anger. The speech that is restricted is probably angry speech.

You need to be slow to wrath and slow to speak. And quick to hear. In Proverbs chapter 18, we are warned against speaking too soon.

Proverbs 18 and verse 13 says, He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is a shame and a folly to him. It also says in Proverbs 18 verse 17, The first one to plead his cause seems right until his neighbor comes and examines him. Which is why it's foolish to answer a matter before you've heard both sides.

He that answers a matter before he hears it, be slow to speak and quick to hear. A lot of times the things that we would get angry about are things that if we knew the whole story we wouldn't get angry about. We hear that somebody said something allegedly about us or about someone we care about or did something wrong to them.

And our immediate response is to judge, to make an instant judgment about the matter, to answer the matter without having heard the whole thing, and to get angry. And James says, no, you need to be slow to speak, slow to rap, quick to hear. Because many times once you've heard more, you realize that rap would have been out of place or an



improper response in this case.

It would have been premature. And so don't answer prematurely. In Proverbs 29 and 11, it says, A fool vents all his feelings.

King James says, a fool speaks all his heart, speaks all his whole mind. Here it says, a fool vents all his feelings because a wise man holds them back. The person who vents everything that comes to his mind as soon as it comes to his mind, who's quick to speak, is a fool.

But a person who's quick to hear and slow to speak is a wise man, Proverbs 29 and 11. Okay, now James says, be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to rap. The reference to rap here may echo back to the Sermon on the Mount also because Jesus spoke against anger there and he indicated that it's akin to murder.

He said in Matthew 5, 22, But I say to you that whoever is angry at his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. Now, without a cause is a phrase that's not found in some of the manuscripts and it is in others. Being angry without a cause.

Sometimes I should just say, he that is angry at his brother is in danger of the judgment. In any case, what Jesus is getting at, it's right after he's mentioned murder. He's saying that anger is the emotion which leads to murder.

And even if you've become sure of killing someone, but you have the same emotion, it's the same as murder in your heart. It's the same as looking at a woman to lust after her. It's the same as adultery in the heart.

To have that motivation, to nurture that desire for revenge or for punishment or for violence is the same thing as committing the act as far as God is concerned. Just like to nurture lust in your heart for a woman is the same in God's eyes as committing the act. Now, in James 1, verse 20, it says, The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

That's an interesting thing because the Old Testament seems to say the opposite. Over in Psalm 76, in verse 10, it says, Surely the wrath of man shall praise you. With the remainder of wrath you shall gird yourself.

In other words, even the wrath of man can be used by God to bring praise and glory to himself. This is really a statement about God's sovereignty. It is not saying that God prefers man to be wrathful and prefers that as his preferred method of bringing praise to himself, but rather the wrath of man, which is not ordinarily that means by which God works his righteousness.

Even so, he is sovereign enough to exploit even that for his glory. We think of Isaiah chapter 10, where the Assyrians are just swallowing up kingdom after kingdom, boasting

of it. It's in their heart just to swallow up nations, not a few, and they're boasting of their pride and their conquest and so forth.

But God says they're boasting like an axe boasts against the one who hews with it or like a saw against him that uses it. They're just a tool in God's hand. God is using them to judge his people.

They may be acting out of wrath. They may be acting out of greed or whatever it may be, but God turns it around to his glory, to his praise, and for his use. Now, to say the wrath of man should praise you, as I said, simply means that God is powerful enough to use even that.

But what James tells us is that the wrath of man is not what God prefers to use. That as far as Christians are concerned, Christians desiring to bring about the righteousness of God on the earth, that is not to be done through wrath. The wrath of man is not what God prefers.

Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus in the garden, because Peter was angry and defensive of Jesus. But Jesus said, put away your sword. That's not the way we're going to do things here.

And he healed the man's ear. It says in... Oh, where is it? The end of chapter 3 of James. James 3.18 says, Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Another reference to the sorrow of death. Blessed are the peacemakers. Those who make peace are sowing seeds that produce the fruit of righteousness.

The righteousness of God is not worked through the wrath of man, but through peacemaking. To produce righteousness, you sow the seeds of peacemaking. Not the seeds of wrath.

That's what James is telling us here. Which means, of course, that to go out and shoot at abortionists, though it may be done with the desire to bring about righteousness, the righteousness of God, bringing an end to abortion, first of all, that isn't likely to succeed. And even if it did succeed, it's not the way God wants to bring about His righteousness.

Not by the wrath of man. That's not what God chooses as His tool. Preferably, He wants His people at least to seek His righteousness through peacemaking, not through wrath.

Verse 21, Therefore lay aside all filthiness, and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror, for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, this one will be blessed in what he does. There's another blessing. Back in verse 12, there's a blessing on one who endures temptation.

There's also a blessing on those who look carefully into the perfect law of liberty, which is of course later what he calls the royal law in chapter 2, verse 8, you shall love your neighbors yourself. It's a law of liberty. It releases you from all other laws.

The bondage of hundreds of rules which characterize Judaism is replaced by the freedom of having only one rule, love your neighbors yourself. That sets you free from all other regulations. If you simply do that, you do it all.

And it's a freedom from legalism that this law brings. It is a law, however. Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 said when I'm with the Jews, I behave as a Jew, that I might win the Jews.

When I'm with those under the law, I live as one under the law, that I might win those who are under the law. When I'm with those who are without law, without the law, I live as one without the law. Then he says not being without law before God, but under the law of Christ.

Notice he can live, he's free to live without the law of Moses, but he's not free to live without the law of Christ. The law of Christ is that we love one another. And if I live by that, then I'm free from the law of Moses because I won't violate the issues that are of importance in that law anyway if I'm loving my brother.

Now James tells us in verse 21, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. The idea of the word being implanted comes, no doubt, from Jesus' parables of the seed and the sower. The sower sows the seed, it falls on different kinds of soil.

In some cases it's implanted. But it fell on the wayside, it wasn't implanted, the birds came and took it away. Others fell on the floor, some fell on good ground, but others fell on stony ground.

And the implanting of the word, he said the seed is the word of God. The soil is obviously referring to different kinds of heart. To receive the implanted word fruitfully, you need to receive with meekness the implanted word.

Meekness is a teachable spirit. I remember a younger Christian asking me once, he said, spiritual growth, does it just happen at whatever rate God wants it to happen, or is there anything you can do to implement, to help it along, to facilitate your own spiritual growth? And I thought about that for a long time and I said, I think the one thing, more than any other, that will facilitate spiritual maturity and growth is to keep a teachable spirit. Just be willing to say you are wrong, be willing to change your mind, be willing to

implement whatever God says through another or through the word, and just don't be defensive of your position, but just be teachable.

Be meek. Don't assert yourself, but receive meekly the word of God. Whether it's preached at you, counselled at you, or whether you're just reading it, the word of God is a living thing, like a seed, implanted, and it grows, and produces fruit and maturity.

It saves your soul. Now, this reference to laying aside filthiness, and overflowing wickedness, resembles very much a similar passage in 1 Peter. Because in 1 Peter 1, verse 23, he says, having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, the word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Now, here he talks about we were born again, by the word of God being planted, like a seed. It's the same thing James says, where the implanted word was able to save your souls. And then it says in the end of verse 25, now this is the word by which the gospel was preached to you.

Then verse 1 of chapter 2, therefore laying aside all malice and all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted the Lord's graciousness. Notice, the word is like a seed, which lives and abides forever, and we're born again by that, we're saved by that, and so told to put aside certain things. In James, we're supposed to lay aside all filthiness and overflowing wickedness.

In 1 Peter, lay aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking. And then in James, it's received with meekness, the implanted word. In 1 Peter, it's like newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

So we have the same thought in different words in these two epistles. Now, having received the implanted word, that's not all there is to it. Having received it, we need to become doers of it.

And this is brought out by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount also. And James may be self-consciously expanding on what Jesus said on it. Because James says, Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Jesus said in Matthew 7, verses 24 through 27, Not everybody who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of God, but he that does the will of my Father. I say unto you, that in that day many shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name, and prophesy on your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And I will profess them depart from me. I never knew you.

Now, they were deceived. They were deceived into thinking they were Christians, but they weren't. They knew the name of Jesus.

They no doubt knew the gospel. They knew the word of God. They even prophesied.

But they were deceived into thinking they were believers. And they were not, because they were not doers. They did not do the will of the Father.

They knew what to do, but they didn't do it. James says, Don't deceive yourself. Don't be one of these self-deceived ones.

Don't be just a hearer, but be a doer. For if anyone hears the word, verse 23, and is not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror. The word of God is like a mirror.

It shows you your own character. It shows you yourself, your own rebellion, your own filthiness is made visible by reading the standards that God has in his word. He speaks to you about yourself a great deal when you reflect on the word of God like a mirror.

For he observes himself and goes away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. It's interesting how often people look into mirrors. Seems like having looked in once, that'd be enough.

You know what you look like. Maybe it's vanity. You ever been to one of those department stores where they have these pillars holding up the roof? These pillars are covered, you know, square pillars with mirror on them, you know? And you walk by and you kind of glance over to your left, right? You walk by and glance over again to see if you still look the same.

And in every pillar you glance over at to see as if you forgot what you looked like already. Of course, that's probably more vanity than anything else, but James is saying, a person looks into the mirror and they go away and forget what they look like. That's like a man who hears the word of God.

He sees himself but he forgets. He doesn't put it into practice and therefore it doesn't stick with him. And he says, but on the contrary, the person who does look into the perfect law of their name continue in it.

Now, continuing in the word of God means more than just keeping your nose in the book. But abiding in it, dwelling in it, meditating on it, doing what it says. This is all part of continuing in the word.

That person not being a forgetful here, but a doer of the work. This one will be blessed in what he does. The person who does what he knows to do.

This is the thing. In John 13, 17, Jesus said, if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. John 13, 17.

John 13, 17. Same thing James says. This man is blessed in what he does because he

does what he knows to do.

Jesus said, if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Same thing James says here. Now, verses 26 and 27.

If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep one self unspotted from the world. Now, he tells us what pure religion is and what useless religion is.

Useless religion, at least one way to discern it, is that it's a person who in all other respects may seem religious, but his tongue gives him away. Like Peter warming himself at the fire, he said, you're surely a Galilean. Your speech betrays you.

Well, he probably had a Galilean accent. But, our speech may betray us also. In all other respects we may seem to be true Christians, but your speech will betray you.

It's like in Aesop's Fables, there was a donkey that pounded a dead lion skin. And he said, well, you're getting respect on how I pounded this lion skin and how I'll go around and everyone will respect me because everyone respects a lion, so I'll pound this lion skin. They walked around and sure enough all the animals in the forest were terrified of him and deferred to him and gave way to him.

Finally he started feeling his own speaking and he said, I'm going to just let out a mighty roar. And instead he let out the bray of a donkey and then no one respected him anymore because they knew what he looked like. His mouth gave him away.

Inside he's still a donkey. And that's sort of how it is with people, really. They may learn to put on the outward trappings of religiosity or Christianity, but their mouth gives them away if they don't bridle their tongue.

Then their religion is useless. Can you imagine anything more horrible than for God's word to say of you, your religion was useless. Useless! What is religion for anyway but to commend you to God? To live in such a way as will bring God's favor in the end and no regrets on your part.

And imagine someone who goes through all those motions and finds out their religion was useless. They deceive their own heart. A person who seems religious and doesn't bridle his tongue deceives his own heart.

Now later on we're going to be told in chapter 3 that you cannot tame your tongue. No man can tame the tongue, he says in verse 8 of chapter 3. But one is required to bridle his tongue. The difference between taming and bridling will become evident immediately when you reflect upon it.

It's one thing to bridle a horse, it's another thing to break it. If you go to a rodeo you'll see horses that have been bridled that have not been broken, not been tamed. They're still wild, they're still drunk though.

Say a person who's a good rider can stay on their back for a long time and may even eventually break them. But for a good while they're bridled and unbroken. And most horses I think, if I'm not mistaken, probably all horses can be broken, tamed and domesticated.

Although I remember reading when I was younger that all those zebras, which are very much like horses, can be bridled and ridden, sometimes clowns ride them in circuses and so forth, yet they never tame. You can't break them. They'll never be a tamed animal.

You can't domesticate the wild spirit of this creature. But you can bridle it. And you can control it as long as the bridle's on it.

You can't ever trust it, because its nature remains unchanged. You can't just hope that someday it'll welcome you on its back and welcome your control. But you can't impose your control.

So the tummy is the same, because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks in your heart until the day you die, probably, will have a part of it that is on the enemy's side. Now that's something a lot of people wouldn't want to hear, but that's what the flesh is. The flesh is a set of desires of their own kind.

And those desires spring from the inner man. And that sinfulness of nature can manifest at any time in the Christian life through unwise speech, gossip. I don't know that cursing and blasphemy and profanity is what it's like here.

I think it has more to do with saying things that are hurtful and saying things that hurt people's reputations and so forth. And so forth. I mean, that's the kind of stuff that proves that in the heart there's no love.

Their religion on the outside is proven false by the lack of love in their speech. And the tongue can't be tamed. The heart has to be brought under, you know, has to be broken, has to be changed.

But the tongue itself will always tend to speak its mind. But you need a bridle. A person who lets their tongue just speak whatever impulse comes is foolish and is self-deceived and their religion is vague.

Yes, sir? Are there scriptures that would equate the flesh with the heart? The heart of the heart? No. No, I can't. But, um, Paul does say that there are desires in his members.

A law in his members which is at war with the law of his mind. Now, the word heart

doesn't appear in that whole discussion. Although we might say the mind is being equated in that discussion with the heart.

But maybe not. The heart sometimes just refers to the inward man. The seat of the will and the desires and so forth of the personality is sometimes referred to by the heart in the Bible.

And, uh, in that sense, our personalities have two sets of desires. And we have the desires of our flesh. The law that makes war with the law of our mind.

And, uh, I don't know whether it would be correct to use the word heart in describing that. I did use that. Because what I meant to say is that out of the mouth, or the mouth speaks what comes out from inside.

Jesus used the word heart for that. And he said out of the heart received blasphemies and adulteries and all those kinds of things. Which obviously are fleshly things.

Uh, so, of course our hearts get changed. We get a, figuratively speaking, we get a new heart. When we get saved he writes his laws in our hearts.

But, uh, those desires that were formerly there for evil things sometimes can arise. They apparently are there somewhere. There's something in our nature that that, uh, our heart's somehow in it.

Uh, but I don't want to get into that kind of deep sorting out of what is the heart and everything like that. It might have been, uh, unfortunate that I made reference to the heart there in that respect. But I don't think it's wrong to Jesus.

I said the things that come out of a heart that the Bible meant are things that are flesh to things. They're the same things Paul calls works of the flesh. So, uh, apparently the flesh, fleshly desires are related in some sense with what the Bible calls the heart.

Uh, and despite the fact that the Christian's heart is a new heart, a changed heart, a heart with a law written on it and so forth, uh, the fact that there's still appeal, uh, of these worldly, or these, uh, fleshly lusts, shows that apparently it's not an altogether changed heart. Not a heart that is 100% uh, renovated. At least it has potential still for evil.

Ah, by the way, another place that might speak along those lines would be, I think, in uh, Hebrews chapter 3, using language that may be like that, uh, verse 12, Hebrews 3, 12, writing to Christians, he says, Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Now here the evil of the heart is the unbelief, but it does speak of Christians needing to beware of an evil heart. And, uh, so I would say there's some support there, possibly for the desires of the flesh having some connection to what the Bible calls the heart.



Though again, what the Bible calls the heart may be a very flexible concept. Sometimes it just means the desires, sometimes it just means the thoughts, sometimes it may just mean the inner man as opposed to the outer man. You know, so it's a kind of a flexible term.

Anyway, the person who doesn't think that controlling his speech is important, uh, his religion, whatever traffics of religion he may have otherwise is empty. It's useless. Uh, Christians, of course, need to keep in mind that the most damage of all is done not by the hands, uh, and not by any other thing but by the tongue.

Every evil thing can be promoted by evil communication. James says in chapter 3 that the tongue is a world of iniquity. It's so set on our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature and it's set on fire by hell.

That's what he says about the tongue in James 3.6. James 3.6. A major problem is the tongue. And a person who in all other respects is a good Christian but gossips or speaks harshly and, you know, and unkindly to a person shows that he has no love in his heart. And love is what religion is all about.

True religion. And the way James puts it, pure religion and unto God the poor God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their trouble. Notice, visible manifestations of love speaking in the true spirit of an Old Testament prophet, uh, again showing God's frequently mentioned concern for the poor, the widows, the orphans.

Uh, to take care of these people is the true demonstration of love because they can't repay you. And therefore it is love that motivates you to help them rather than the hope of being repaid or something else like that. That's pure and unbound religion.

And also to keep himself unspotted from the world. To keep your garments clean and unspotted from the defilement of the world. This is something that is part of true religion too, that you don't pick up the defilement of the world.

We live in the world, but we are not allowed to allow its taint to come to be upon us. Uh, we must keep our garments clean. Uh, and the garment, of course, is a figure of speech for your life.

Over at Jude in verse 22 and 23, Jude says that on some have compassion making a distinction, but others say with fear pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. This is figure of speech too. Hating the garment defiled by the flesh.

Uh, it just means that we should despise to have any compromise in the world. Even the clothing defiled by the world. We want to avoid it as much as possible.

Uh, it's not talking about clothing styles, worldly clothing, fashions, and so forth. It's talking about something else. It's more coming from the image of the Old Testament of a

person who is a leopard, or a woman or a period, or a man who had a seminal issue or something like that.

He was defiled and his clothing was defiled. And after after he or she had come through their period of uncleanness, they would then have a ceremonial washing and they'd have to wash their clothes as well. Uh, it was even defiling to touch the clothing of a defiled person until they washed them.

So the idea is that, of course, ceremonial defilement is a type of moral it's a type in the shadow of moral defilement of sin. So he's using that imagery saying don't have any contact, even with the clothing that's defiled. Uh, Cindy? Um, I was just going to say something about the cup.

Uh-huh. It's so true that what comes out of our when it's in our heart we speak. And I think that you know, when we put our eyes on Jesus we can't help but love others and see the good in them.

When we put our eyes on God's people, then we see their leanness in their consciousness to speak bad about others. I see that myself a lot. Yeah, I guess that like Paul says the tongue is the last last frontier to defeat.

You know, I mean, James says that, and Paul talks about equal communications, and Jesus talks about it. Um, we, and Proverbs talks about it. You know, I mean, there's a lot there.

Psalms, uh, the Bible warns us many times about the dangers of hurting with the tongue. Proverbs says, there's he that speaks as the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health or healing. And, you know, you can speak in such a way to slaughter people or in such a way that heals them.

Very hard to. Pardon? When you have to deal with yourself, it's a heart checker. Heart checker, yeah, it's like a barometer of what your, where your spirit is.

This is on chapter two. My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. King James says, with respect of persons.

It means partiality. Preferring a person not on the basis of their marriage, but on the basis of their status. In many places, the Bible says that God is not a respecter of persons.

Paul says that in Romans 10, for example. And in places like that, it usually means that God doesn't respect the Jewish person over the Gentile person, all other things being equal. Okay? Now, God does respect godly people more than ungodly people.

God says in 1 Samuel chapter 2, He that honors me, I will honor. He that despises me

shall be lightly esteemed. So, obviously, God prefers some people over others.

He honors some more than others. He respects some people because they're godless. When the Bible says He's not a respecter of persons, it always means that although men sometimes respect a category of other people over another category of people, regardless of their moral virtue, because of their race, because of their money, because of their status in society, God doesn't look at people that way.

He doesn't respect personhood in those terms. And when Paul says in Romans 10, God's not a respecter of persons, he means He doesn't respect Jewish persons over Gentile persons, assuming an equalness of their moral lives and their spiritual qualities. Now, He does prefer a Jewish believer over a Gentile unbeliever.

But He also prefers a Gentile believer over a Jewish unbeliever. Belief, righteousness, and so forth, do cause a person to be preferred by God over someone else, but it is not a matter of fleshly considerations. Now, James is talking here about, not so much honoring Jews over Gentiles, but honoring rich over poor.

This is also the great temptation of churches and Christians and individuals, is that we show favor to the rich. Now, often we don't even think about why we're doing this. But the reason, if we would stretch our hearts is usually because we know that rich people can do you a favor someday.

Maybe someday they'll come back to you sometime. And that's what you're supposed to be aware of, that kind of motivation. Do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of glory with partiality, for if there should come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, or with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, you sit here in a good place.

And say to the poor man, you stand there, sit here at my footstool. Have you not been shown partiality among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts, evil motivations? Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and to be heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not rich men oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You do well. But, if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. Now we'll stop there for a moment.

Take those first eight verses. Now he has just said in chapter 1 verse 27 that pure religion pays attention to the poor, to the orphans, to the widows, those who have needs

but have no way of repaying those who help them. Jesus said in Luke chapter 14 when you make a feast, don't invite your rich neighbors and friends because they might invite you to a feast after that, and then you'll be repaid.

But he said when you make a feast, invite the poor, the lame, the blind, the people who can no way repay you, because then you'll be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous. In other words, you should choose prefer to do your works for those who can't pay you back. You know why? It's more of a test of your heart, like your mouth is a test of your heart.

You never know if you're doing good deeds out of good motives, when in fact there is something for you to gain from those good deeds. But if there's nothing you can gain from it, you're just doing it because someone has a need and you care. That's genuine love.

Now, with rich people it's hard not to show deference. I mean, there's a temptation to defer to them. Pastors are continually struggling with this.

Some have actually given in to the temptation to say the things that don't offend the rich people in the church. To avoid preaching sermons about the Sermon on the Mount, which is pretty hard on rich people. To avoid preaching sermons about the rich unruly.

To avoid preaching sermons about Lazarus and the rich men. To avoid preaching the things that Jesus preached, because those kind of things kind of offend rich people. Or to offend preaching against the sins of certain people in the congregation who also happen to be rich.

I mean, if there's an alcoholic rich man in the church, or an adulterous rich man in the church, many pastors will not speak against those sins for fear of losing the support of that rich contributor. This is something that is not so to be. This is showing preference to the rich.

If there comes in a rich man and you show him preference and treat the poor differently, you are showing yourself to be motivated by evil desire, by evil thoughts. You're a judge of evil thoughts. Now he makes specific reference to clothing, and it's amazing with this kind of clear directive in the Bible that the church, which reads the Bible and reads James no doubt sometimes, could so easily fall into violation of what he says here.

He indicates that people who come to church in fancy clothes should not be preferred over those who come in filthy clothes. Now I don't think that any Christian prefers to be seen in filthy clothes. I mean, whether in church or elsewhere.

And in fact I think it's kind of rude if you have the possibility of keeping your clothes clean to go around smelling dirty clothes. And this is not polite. It's not loving.

It can be offensive to people. But there certainly is the case of a poor man who has no opportunity to clean his clothes. Homeless people or something.

But I'll tell you, there's people who smell, they reek so much of whatever environment they've been in because their clothing, they've been wearing it for weeks. And you don't even want to come close to them sometimes. And yet James indicates you should treat them with the same respect.

You should give them the same kind of honored seating in the church as you give a man in fine clothing. There are churches which do not state it, but imply, and there are some that come right out and state it, that they think you should dress up nice when you come to church. And they definitely show preference to those who do.

Now this is partly based on, I think, wrongheadedness about God. Because they think it matters to God what you wear. They think that God cares whether you're dressed in a suit and tie or not.

And they think you should show respect to God. Well, obviously you should show respect to God, but man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the inside. I think it's better to have your heart dressed properly when you come to church than your body.

But anyway, he basically rebukes those who he showed preference to, those who dress well and who have money and so forth, over the others. Now he says, actually, it's amazing that you Christians would tend to even defer to the rich at all. Aren't they your enemies for the most part? It says, it says, aren't they the ones who blaspheme the noble name by which you're called? Aren't they the ones who oppress you and drag you into the courts? I'm not sure exactly what the situation was here, but it certainly suggests that the Jewish believers in question were under persecution.

And their persecutors were apparently rich people. There's a good chance they were rich Jewish people who were offended by their family members or whatever, or neighbors who were also Jewish becoming Christians. These were Jewish Christians.

And anyway, whoever it was, rich men were oppressing them. And he says, why would you want to side with this category of people? They're the ones who drag you to court. Now he says in verse 5, Listen, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith? That's what we said earlier.

That those who are poor have more of an ability, and because of the compelling need of their life, to be faith people. To trust in God when they can't lean on the arm of the flesh. When they can't lean on riches, because there are no riches there.

Over in 1 Timothy chapter 6, Paul says that the rich people have to be continually reminded of this, not to trust in their riches. In 1 Timothy 6, 17, it says, Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in

the living God. So rich people have to be taught, they need to be charged, not to trust in their riches.

Because it is the natural thing to do. I suppose I probably told you before about the time when my wife was killed and I received an insurance settlement from the insurance company that insured the truck that hit her. And it was a lot of money for me.

Today, it would still be a lot of money for me if I received it, but it was even more for me then because I lived much poorer then than I do now. And happily so. And I never expected or even desired to have this much money.

In fact, it was kind of a burden to me, because now what do I do? You know, I mean, it's never been a problem of me deciding how to spend my money because there never was much. There was enough to pay my phone bill and put food on the table and put gas in my car and give a little away here and there, but you know, I never had any hard decisions about stewardship when I didn't have much money. And all of a sudden, this money was given to me.

And anyway, there's a lot of lessons I learned out of that and some of which I've given in other studies here. But one thing this caused in my mind that I was really graphically made plain to me when I had it was how I had always lived by faith before, and I found it almost impossible to live by faith with that money there. I don't mean to say I couldn't be a good Christian and live a moral life and be obedient to God, but it was hard for me to live with the same kind of sense of needing God that I hadn't before.

Because I always, month by month, sometimes week by week or day by day, I needed the provision of God to come out of nowhere in my life prior to this. And God always came through and I just lived in a very close, reliant, dependent relationship on God. And that kind of trust is really a very satisfying thing and it really puts us in a position to see God work.

But when I had all that money, I just couldn't see myself as being in a crisis financially. I mean, I could pray for money, but it made no sense. There was money already there.

And I never really had to wonder whether I should pray more for my phone bill or whatever. I mean, just, the money was there. It was uncertain.

You didn't have to trust God for a provision. Because he had already done so and I could live for several years off of it. And I was very glad when that money was gone.

Because I understood this verse. I think I understood it academically before this too. I think I knew this to be true.

But I really have found it to be true that God has chosen the poor in this world to be the ones who are rich in faith. Because there's a certain kind of faith that poor people alone

can have. Not saving faith.

Rich people can have saving faith, just like poor people can. Although it's hard for them, even to have that. But the kind of faith that leans totally upon God, day in and day out, is the kind of faith which the poor can have quite readily and naturally, but which the rich have to cultivate and have a great difficulty, maybe even impossibility, of knowing that kind of dependency.

Now he says of the poor in verse 5, God has chosen them to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom which is promised to those who love him. This is the second time he's referred to a promise made to those who love him. He said those who endure temptation, in verse 12, will receive a crown of life which Lord has promised to those who love him.

And now he mentions another promise. A promise to the poor who love him that they will receive the kingdom. What promise does he have in mind? Obviously Luke 6.20. Blessed are you poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

The exact promise. Luke 6.20. Blessed are you poor for yours is the kingdom of God. God has chosen the poor to be heirs of the kingdom, he says.

But the rich, they tend to be enemies of Christ. They tend to be enemies of the Christians. They drag them before the course.

They blaspheme the holy name by which they're called. And then we come to verse 8, which I guess we'll have to take up next time.