

James 1:19–27

Father's Word-Work in His Children

Thursday, December 28, 2023 • Read James 1:19–27

Questions from the Scripture text: What does v19 call the reader? For which men does it give a command? What does it say about hearing? Speaking? Becoming angry? Whose wrath cannot do what (v20)? What two things are believers to lay aside (v21)? How much of each? What are they to receive? How is this Word conveyed to them? In what manner are they to receive it? What is it able to do? What two ways must they engage the Word (v22)? What are they doing to themselves if they leave off the doing part?

**How do believers reflect the character of their Father of lights?** James 1:19–27 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these nine verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God works in believers by His implanted Word to make them humble, gentle, steady, pure, and fruitful.**

**The Father of lights and the beloved brethren that He brought forth.** "Beloved brethren" ties v19 back to v16–18. The constancy and character of the Father of lights should shape the constancy and character of his children who are lights upon the Earth. So v19–20 describes not only a heavenly-Father-like gentleness (as brought out in being "slow to become angry") but a heavenly-Father-like steadiness (as brought out in being "quick to hear and slow to speak").

If our flesh gets heated, this will fail to produce "the righteousness of God"—neither in the sense of making us to be more like our Father of lights, nor in the sense of bringing about true justice in relationships or spheres upon the earth.

**Where Father-like steadiness comes from.** If this steadiness is going to be outward (in our interactions with men, v19), then it first must exist inwardly (in the singleness and purity of our own souls, and in our interactions with God, v21). Filthiness, or impurity, introduces variation to the purpose and pleasures and principles of our life. It all must be laid aside as we pursue an inward consistency that comes from God.

If we want the "overflow" (surplus) of our heart to become godly, it will come by God's work in implanting the Word into us. As Jesus taught in the parable of the soils (cf. Mt 13:1–23), this requires us to receive the Word meekly (humbly, soft-heartedly, as here), which includes/involves receiving the Word deeply and undistractedly.

**How we know that we are meekly receiving the implanted Word.** And since God has appointed His word as the means by which He produces consistency in the heart, it comes from a consistent meekness before His word. The second half of v21 corresponds to what our Lord prayed for us in Jn 17:17.

But while inward consistency and meekness before God's Word is primary and prerequisite, it must not be isolated from the outward conduct. If it is not being worked out from the heart in the life, then we can be sure that it our idea that the Word is being worked into our heart is a self-deception (v22)!

Notice that in v23–25, we are not to think that we will be blessed "by" what we do, but rather "in" what we do. The blessing comes by God and His word. The one who is merely a doer is not the blessed one. The blessed one is the one whose "doing" is a "continuing" in the law of liberty—proceeding to live according to that word that he has received from his Savior, his Liberator, Who uses the Word to work in him.

We must receive the law as a personal interaction with the God Who has saved us, and is saving us, rather than as a sort of contract, by which we could somehow obligate God (!) through our works. When we receive the law as personally received law from the God who has saved us, and is saving us, then the law becomes, for us, not a law of bondage but a law of liberty, as verse 25 calls it.

**Real, useful religion.** v26–27 proceed to tell us about "pure and undefiled religion"—religion that is freed of the "all filthiness" from v21. True religion, in which the Father uses His Word to work us into His likeness, into Christ's likeness. This includes not just keeping oneself unspotted from the world (v27c), and noticing with special care, those whom God himself notices and visits with special care, namely orphans and widows (v27b), but especially godly use of the tongue (v26).

So v19 began the section addressing the tongue, v26 identifies tongue sin as a litmus test for the heart deception of the mere hearer from v22, and the bulk of chapter 3 will be spent upon the tongue and its sinfulness as an indicator of the heart-fountain out of which the speech is overflowing. So also, here, an unbridled tongue is evidence that whatever religion we think we have is actually a useless delusion (v26).

In what situations do you most need to work on slowness to speak and slowness to anger? What kind of encounter with the Word does God use to produce that? How are you going to approach listening to sermons, in light of this passage? What has been your strategy for turning what you hear in the preaching into a plan of action? How have you been going about evaluating whether you are keeping those vows to the Lord?

*Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You for being a Father of constant light to us. Forgive us for how impure, mixed, and unsteady is our walk with You. Forgive us for how this unsteadiness presents itself in being easily angered and quick to speak. Forgive us for how often we have sat under Your word not with humility and receptivity but with dullness and even resistance. Forgive us when we do not receive it as from You and for our liberty. Forgive us for when we have heard it, but then we act as if You and Your Word make no difference in our lives. Forgive us for forgetting orphans and widows. Forgive us for allowing ourselves to be defiled by the world. Truly, Lord, Your Word exposes our remaining sin. Forgive us and cleanse us, we ask, through Christ, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP15 "Within Your Tent Who Will Reside?" or TPH461 "Blessed Are the Sons of God"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

James one versus 19 through 27. These are god's words. So, then my beloved brethren. Let every man be swift to here. Slow to speak. Slow to Roth. For the wrath of man does not produce. The righteousness of god. 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 tours of the word. Are not hearers only deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer. Here's like a man observing his natural face in a mirror. Free 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. Is not uh, forgetful here. But a doer of the work. This one will be blessed and what he does. If anyone amongs you, thanks, 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. There's this. To visit orphans and widows in their trouble. And to keep oneself. Unspotted. From the world. So, for the reading of gods inspired and And errant.

Well, last week in verses 1 through 18, we heard about How the key to counting various trials? All joy. Is to see that they come to us in the invariable unvarying. Goodness of our god, who is to us a father of lights From him. Every good and every perfect gift.

Is from above and comes down from him. And with him, there is no variation. Or shadow. And then there's this transition into the section that we are in of his own. Will he brought us forth by the word of truth? So not only is he a father of light, But if he is a father of lights and he begot us, he brought us forth.

What sort of children? Would you expect us to be or to become? Children of lights. And so, since he is, Unvarying, invariable constant. In his goodness, we ought to be constant. And reflecting his goodness and his character. So he says, so then my beloved brethren and this ties verse 19, through 27.

Back to verse 16 where he said do not be deceived my beloved brethren. And then verse 17, where he says every good gift and every perfect gift that's from above, and comes down from the father of lights, which explains the slightly unique wording in verse 27, pure and undefiled religion before god and the father Uh, we would expect before god, our father, wouldn't we?

And so in verse 27, he's saying the way that this kind of religion gets worked out in our lives. Is by the character of our heavenly father. Who has given to us spiritual life. By his spirit in his son, Producing and imitation of himself. Pure and undefiled are themselves characteristics that are very closely related to aren't they to?

Unvarying and never a shadow passing over. And so, when we think about lay aside, all filthiness and verse 21, that's lay aside, everything that would be a corruption or an impurity. In the godliness. That god has producing in us as his children. United to christ, and dwelt by the spirit, of sonship the spirit of christ.

And so, there is a A constancy. That is. To be reflected in the christian's character. This constancy is true of all godliness of all righteousness, but one of the things, That one of the Instabilities or interruptions or variations? That especially shows up in a christian, Is when he speaks out of turn or uses his mouth in an ungodly way.

Or he becomes frustrated and angry. So, this first instruction commandment in verse 19 is very closely related. Because gentleness and steadiness. Are connected united in the character of a believer. So he says, say, then 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 that last statement, then in verse 20, Is important in two different ways. One. Often one of the reasons we strike out in heat is because we think that our indignation, our Uh, Irritation. And it may be it something that is unrighteous.

But if we think that our losing, our cool and answering, and stopping something in our indignation is going to set things, right? And we are greatly mistaken. Is. Is, are we going to do better than god? Who is enduring patiently? Vessels prepared for wrath. And who does break out in time.

In his wrath against sin, and And brings. Uh, breakings of his justice out and as appointed, Authorities. In home and in church, and in society, and In nation. Whose job it is to Uh, to use the authority in their specific sphere. In a way that Um, Encourages the good and punishes the evil.

Are we going to suddenly? Because we got so upset and we became full of hot anger. Are we going to do better? In bringing the righteousness of god into time. Then if we had, Uh, gently steadily. Thoughtfully. Carried out, whatever. Our particular role isn't often our particular role is brother or friend or neighbor is rebuke, even when we're not an authority.

But that comes from careful consideration. Of whom god has made us to be to one another. Not from getting so upset about and injury or offense or perceived injury or events. Whether to us or to someone else, That we become full of wrath. So, that's one way that we have to think about for the righteousness of, man, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of god, but the other way is actually The, the one that we begin thinking about, That the wrath of man is not how we become more like god.

In his righteousness. That's fleshly wrath does not make us more godly even if in retrospect we can rationalize how, right? It was for us to get so angry. No. If we are swift to here, And slow to speak. Doesn't mean we never speak. And slow draft doesn't mean we're never full of wrath.

It gives us the opportunity. And meditation upon god's word and responds to his word as we're about to hear. And the ensuing verses and the following verses. It gives us the opportunity, not to have the wrath of man. But to imitate our father. And to submit to our father.

To imitate him in. The wisdom and judiciousness of his character. And we can see Jesus did. Become very angry at times but not quickly. Hastily, Angry. And we can see him as the elder brother. It's a perfect example to us. And so we can submit also therefore To those institutions and hierarchies of authority.

That the lord has put. Um, In those societies, particularly family church nation. That he has invented. So we're going to be below as beloved brethren who our children of the heavenly father. We are to be swift to hear, slow to speak. Slow to wrath. This is one way that We would show ourselves unstable.

If we speak too quickly to easily out of turn or easily angered hastily angered, Uh, but those aren't the only impurities that we should be seeking to get rid of. We want to lay aside all filthiness versus 21 so that we can come more and more into the unspotted and undefiled religion.

Verse 27. Well, how are we to lay aside to all filthiness? Well, that which is worked out. In. Being slow to speak. Um, Uh, slow to wrath quick to hear bridling our tongue verse 26. Paying careful, special attention to those to whom god pays special attention as he visits orphans and widows in their trouble.

And we seek to do the same Watching out for all of those things by which the world defiles itself because It doesn't know its purpose in god, it doesn't have its pleasure in god, it doesn't draw. Its principles from god rests upon something else for its power than god.

And so there are many things that those who do not know and live apart from the knowledge of god in christ, which is what we mean by the world here. In verse 27. There are many ways in which they are, defiled. And in many of those things since that's just the flash being unhindered, by the knowledge of god in christ.

We too. Have filthiness and us verse 21 that we are to lay aside. Thankfully, the lord gives us the means the method by which He gives us to lay aside. All that filthiness whether it's depending upon ourselves or something, some creaturely Thing for power or finding pleasure in ourselves or purpose in ourselves, or living by our own principles.

And the method by which he gives us to lay aside and to be purified is to receive with meekness. The implanted word. So god gives us a gentleness and humility towards others. First and foremost, by giving us a gentleness and humility before him. And a gentleness and humility before him, is especially going to be expressed in the way that we receive the word and gained by That way of receiving the word.

So receive with meekness with humility the implanted word, which is able to save your souls, And so he speaks there not just of the word itself as the seed which jesus of course does doesn't he and his parable, but which is really the parable of the soils and the good this the good seed is the word But when he calls it, the implanted word, he speaks not just of the word but of the lord himself and what he does with the word, That we would see.

Reading the bible and thinking upon the bible and especially Sitting under. The preaching of the bible receiving with meekness. The implanted word. As romans 10 says, and we'll hear soon in the midweek sermons. How will they hear without a preacher? This received refers to a, Humble way of listening and receiving sermons.

And a hopeful way. Of listening to, and receiving sermons, which is hoping in jesus to plant his word in me. Isn't that much better than thinking? I have got to get this down? So that i remember it with my mind and understand it like i'm supposed to and so that i feel about god and about everything like i'm supposed to so that i will always do just as i'm supposed to.

Well, It's true that you hope all those things will come. From receiving and hearing the word preached. But praise god. He is the one who is planting it. And our great part is to be receivers. To be planted into. Now, he gives us. Um, Council has word for the way to listen.

That does this. You know, you put away distractions like Uh, the thoughts and cares, which can spring up alongside the word, whether pleasures are worries, you. Uh, you want to come with? Uh, not hard heart but willing, ears, willing heart. Uh, you want to receive it deeply So don't just kind of molt over in your thoughts and

interesting curiosity, or Or just thinking about it theoretically, but Um, receiving and thinking.

As you look to gods to help you and do the work in you about how it informs your infection, your affections and And how it changes. What you desire and the order in which you desire things and Um, You know, so the parable of the soils is actually very helpful here, Um, He gives us things to do, but the emphasis here, As on humility and gentleness meekness under what god is doing.

And i find that marvelously hopeful Especially as he. As he warns us about a real danger. Be doers of the word and not hearers only. Deceiving yourselves. So, the person who is only ever contemplative, But he never gets to the working out. What god works in as he works in us both to will and to work for it.

His own good pleasure. And here he gives us the way he works in. Us to will, and to work, according to his own good pleasure by working his word in to us. And now what this is saying is if If you are only a hearer. But you are not a doer, you're never working out.

Your own salvation. Then you may be sure that it is not actually god working his word into you. So that if it is not affecting and shaping and changing our lives, Uh, one secret worship at a time when family worship at a time, one sermon at a time as the lord works in and by his grace makes us also to work out and be doers of the word and not yours.

Only, if that isn't how we are. Experiencing and expressing the ministry of the word. Then we are deceiving ourselves. We are telling ourselves. I am a bible Christian. I meditate upon god's word, so much. Which may even take the form of. I think about theology so much or I have so many feelings about god's weren't.

Or. I often make resolutions according to God's word. But if that, Doesn't issue in actual. Change in the life. Then we're deceiving ourselves. So he says, for If we are here and not a doer. It's like someone who Sees everything that's wrong with him himself in the mirror. Everything that needs attended to, he doesn't attend to it at all.

He goes away and pretty soon. He's forgotten entirely. About whatever his hair looked like or that his teeth looked like there are just about to run out and fall out of his face or Uh, whatever it was it was on his face or You know, that's of course. Um, that would be crazy.

And sometimes there are crazy people who don't really care. Um, But the word is for us, not a mirror for the body. But a mirror for the soul. And here he describes what the bible is like when we look into the bible, As those who have been saved. By god and jesus christ.

And those who have been adopted by the father of lights. And now, we are ourselves as beloved brethren or to become more and more like our heavenly father. Uh, we come to the law as a law of liberty. It is not to us. Uh something by which we think that if we follow these rules, well enough we can obligate god to give us good stuff.

That's legalism. But if you receive the law, if you receive the bible, as a whole, but commandments instruction and the bible specifically As coming from the god who has saved you and is saving, you and is working in you. You see what he's doing. And his law is for you, not a law of bondage or a law that gives opportunity for merit, but it's a law of liberty.

It shows you what freedom looks like, but even more than that. It is an instrument that your redeemer is using to free you. As he works in you. And you say, well, this isn't going to be a law of liberty to me. If i don't, If i don't do anything different as a result of it, And so, you're looking to him independence, upon him and seeking to actually be changed and to change.

As you use it. And his law becomes precious to you, then Yes, because it is his on account of whose it is, it is precious to you, but it's also precious to you because i've how it is used. You come to the word of god in fellowship. With the god who has saved you and is saving you and it has this wonderful name.

When we come to it, that way, the law of liberty. Somebody who hears commandments from the bible. Or instruction from the bible or even application of instruction from the bible and shrinks their nose and says legalism. It's because they do not know. The god who has saved us and is saving us and how he is using his word that he plants in us to change us to make us more like himself to take out in purity that belong to the flesh and to make us more pure and invariable gentle and steady and godly like he is

When we know that that is.

What is happening? In our use of the word, we are excited to come to it, even especially sometimes Um, in some aspects rather When we come to law. And instruction. And it says, But, Yeah, the one who is Uh, looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it.

And there's not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, This one will be blessed and what he does. Notice the one who has blessed, and what he does is not merely a doer of the work. There are many. Legalistic doers of the work. They don't hate the law, they think the law is always congratulating them on a wonderful.

They are These doers are not blessed and they're doing. It's those who come to the law. As a law of liberty. And continue in what their lord is doing in them independence, upon him. These are the ones who as they do the work in delight upon delight in him and dependence upon him.

These are blessed. And what they do. Because they're blessed in him, aren't they? The doing is just. A demonstration, a symptom. An evidence of the fact that he is the one who is doing it. But the blessedness is particularly in him. And not so much in the doing.

By itself. And so, he picks the Uh, the one way that we are often self-deceived and You know, this. Self-deception has. Appeared in verse 22 in particular. Am I one and whom god is working? Uh, well then Let me consider whether What i read and what i sit under and preaching, what i meditate on upon before god.

Is changing. What my conversation sound like? How i sound with my siblings. How i sound with my children. How i sounded my life, how i sound at the church? How it sounded with my neighbor. Because, Um, The one. Who thinks he's a religious but doesn't bridal. His His tongue is in verse 26, is the self-deceived one.

In verse 22. And so, May the lord give us to be. Unspotted from the world and to care about and notice, especially those Whom he cares about net is and notices and to visit them and their trouble. And, To receive with humility. His word. And delighting in him who uses it.

And depending upon him, he uses it To change our behavior to change our life. Uh, by what he is doing in us by his word. And especially, And how we use our tongues. Huh. Well, gonna have almost an entire tractor on that. When we get to verse 3, verse 3, chapter three, By god's help.

Let's pray. Father, thank you. Thank you that you are. The father of lights. Thank you that you are god. And the father, Who works in us by the word that you implant. And by which you are continuing to work out. Um, Our salvation give us. To work out our own salvation and fear, and trembling.

And dependence upon you. Who works in us, but we'll Than to work for your own good pleasure. Give to me, give to These, my wife and children. The fellowship

with you, that comes Both in the times of receiving your word with meekness. And in the times of seeing you, Uh, work in us and help us by your spirit.

And the doing and working out of that word. We pray, especially that you would help us to guard our tongues to be slow to speak. And slow to wrath. Give us not the wrath of man, give us Your righteousness or god to be reproduced. In us. And conformity to jesus from whom it comes by the work of your spirit.

We ask in jesus name, Amen.