

Practical Application of the Word that We Receive

James 1:22-25

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The first chapter of James. We'll begin reading together at verse 18, and we'll read down through verse 25. James, chapter 1, verses 18 through 25. Speaking of the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness of turning, it says in verse 18:

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

Listening to biblical preaching is a great privilege. To have regular exposure to the very *means* that God employs to save and to sanctify His people is a great honor that few people in the world, relatively speaking, enjoy. The vast majority of people in the world have no access to preaching, and what access they do have is to preaching that is corrupt or heretical. And so to have regular exposure to the accurately expounded word of God is a great privilege.

According to Psalm 19, the word of God converts the soul. It makes wise the simple. It rejoices the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It is more valuable than gold, and it is sweeter than honey. To have that brought to us which accomplishes all of these things for us, is a high privilege indeed.

But listening to biblical preaching is not only a great privilege, it is also a great responsibility. Something so valuable must be received with a carefulness that is proportionate to its worth. If someone hands you a brick, well you're pretty casual about the way you take it, and if you drop it, it's no real big deal. But if someone hands you a very, very expensive and ancient fine china vase, you receive it with a great deal of *carefulness*.

And so James therefore is telling us how we should conduct ourselves in relationship to the preaching of the word that we might *rightly* receive it, and in order that we might fully profit *from* it. It is said of the Jews in Hebrews, chapter 4 and verse 2, that the word preached *did not profit* them because they *did not* rightly receive it. Their lack of faith was fatal to their obtaining any profit from the word. And so we must be careful that it would never be said of us that the word preached did not profit *us* because *we* did not rightly receive it.

Now the encouragement, of course, is that if the word *is* rightly received it *will* profit those who receive it. We are told in this passage that it is able to save our souls. It is able to bring great

blessing to us *if* it is rightly received. So James therefore tells us *how* we are to receive this word that we might profit from it.

Now in our previous studies, we have seen that if we are to receive the word properly, there must be personal preparation *before* the preaching of the word. We must prepare our hearts to *hear* the word; otherwise, it will profit little. So we must therefore lay aside the sins that do so *easily* beset us, plow up and prepare the soil of our hearts to receive the Scriptures. We must put away any rebellion that is in our hearts by *repenting* of our sins and *confessing* them to God, and thereby cultivate a humble, submissive, and teachable attitude.

Then we saw, secondly, that there must not only be personal preparation *before* the preaching of the word, there must be active participation *during* the preaching of the word. We are not only to *put away*, to lay apart, all filthiness and abundant wickedness, but then we are to actively *receive*, with meekness, the engrafted word. And so we must come to the preaching of the word with an attentive, active mind, reaching out with all of our ability to understand and remember what it is that we are being taught.

And so listening *carefully* to what we have heard, remembering *accurately* what we have heard, and meditating *thoughtfully* on what we have heard is what *active participation* consists of. And so if we, then, are to rightly receive the word, we must prepare before the preaching, we must actively participate *during* the preaching. And now today we want to consider together a third and final aspect of how we are to relate to the preaching of the word and see that we are not only to engage in personal preparation *before* the preaching, and active participation *during* the preaching, but there must also be *practical implementation after* the preaching of the word. There must be *practical implementation after* the preaching of the word.

So in receiving the word of God, James gives us these three directives. He says, You need to do something before you ever *come* to the preaching. And then you need to be doing something *while* the preaching is going *on*. And then after the preaching is all over, you've got something to do. And this is the thrust of his teaching, in verses 21 through 25. And so we want to consider together this evening, then, that there must be practical implementation after the preaching of the word.

Now notice, if you will, verses 22 through 25. “*But* be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

So in the first place then this evening, let us consider together the *admonition given*—the *admonition given*. And this is found in verse 22. This is the admonition, “[B]e *doers* of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” And so James sees it necessary to issue an admonition to the

people to whom he's writing that it is not enough that you simply *hear* the word of God, but you must do something *about* it.

Now the assumption that lies behind this verse is that these people *are* hearing biblical preaching. He's saying, Don't be hearers only. And the clear implication is that they are *hearers*. They *are* exposing themselves to biblical preaching. They have *found* biblical preaching. They have *exposed* themselves to biblical preaching. And they're actively *listening* to biblical preaching. They regularly attend where there is a faithful exposition of the word of God, but James says this is not enough. There's an *additional* step that must be taken, and that is they must actually have the word control and dictate their behavior in every area of life.

Now many people will pride themselves in attending a good church where there is good preaching. They have, as a result of that preaching, learned a *great deal*. They know what the Bible says with a high degree of *understanding*. They can tell others what God's mind is on various subjects and issues with accuracy, and they can point out the flaws and errors in false teaching and theology. And so this makes them begin to feel virtuous, and it begins to make them feel *mature*, because of all they know and because of all they understand. But if this is where it stops, then we have fallen far short of the whole purpose for which the word is preached.

It's kind of like a person who selects a fine restaurant, orders an excellent dinner, which is brought to his table with impeccable service. And then he walks out without ever eating it. You see, the whole purpose for being in the restaurant in the presence of good food is to *eat* it. And if you don't do that, then the whole purpose for being there has been utterly thwarted.

And so the word of God is supposed to not just inform our mind, but it is to guide our behavior as well. In Psalm 119 and verse 105, it says, "Thy word is a lamp to my *feet*, and a light to my *path*." He is not saying the word merely informs my *mind*, but he is saying that it informs and directs my *walking*, my *actions*, my *behavior*—not just my thinking or my *talking*.

In Psalm 119 and verse 11, it says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart"—that I might be able to win debates. No.—"that I might not sin against thee." And you see, the reason for hearing the word of God is not just to know it. That is not an end in and of itself. The purpose for hearing the word of God is in order that it might *change* and *modify* our moral choices, our behavior, our walk and conduct in this life.

Now this matter of being mere *hearers* of the word and not *doers* of it was the subject of a great many warnings by our Lord Jesus Christ. And I wanted to point out to you just one of them. I thought it was an interesting providence of God that it was contained in our Scripture reading this morning in Matthew, chapter 7. Christ warned people again and again and again and again and again about being mere hearers of the word and not doers. But perhaps the most important passage in which He does so is this one in Matthew 7, verses 21 through 27. In this passage warning against being a hearer and not a doer, He says:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but” rather, “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” In other words, what He said is, Talk is cheap. Actions *speaks*. And so *anyone* can mouth orthodox Christianity and call Jesus *Lord*. But the way you know Jesus *really* is Lord, and thus really Savior, is that you actually carry out the *commands* that that Lord *gives* to you. If you want to know who your real Lord is, ask yourselves, Whose directions do I obey? Whose counsel do I follow? Whose dictates inform my behavior, my thoughts, and my actions? So it’s not enough just to *say* Jesus is Lord, we must actually *do* the *will* of the one who is our Lord, and then in fact, we can say that He is our Lord indeed.

Verse 22: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” And it’s interesting to note that Jesus never denies that the things that they said were *true*. He never says, Oh no, you didn’t do that stuff. He says to them, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” You see, they could *say* the right things and they could engage in external, public, and spectacular activities—casting out demons and doing wonderful works. But you see, when it came to departing from their sins, they *would not* obey Christ’s voice in that area. They insisted that they were Christians while clinging to their sins.

And the thing He indicts them for is not false teaching. He doesn’t indict them for saying, No, this prophesying you did in my name, that was inaccurate; or, The demons you cast out, that was really fraudulent; or, The wonderful works you did, you really didn’t do those, you were just lying. He doesn’t *deny* that. He acknowledges that what they claim is true. But He says to them, You were workers of iniquity. You persisted in your sins. And how many people do we know who are Christians who will go and be involved with some kind of good works, and who will even witness and pass out tracts—and yet, when you look at their lives, there is a consistent pattern of disobedience to the moral commands of Jesus Christ.

Verse 24: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” And so here’s a person who not only *hears* the sayings of Christ—he’s listening to accurate preaching—but then he actually does something about them. This person, he says, when the rain descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house, it will not fall because it is founded upon a rock.

“And everyone who *heareth* these sayings of mine, and doeth them not...” Notice the people are hearing the sayings of Christ. They’re not hearing the sayings of Allah or of Buddha or of some Jehovah’s Witness perverted doctrine. They’re hearing accurate *teaching*. But notice the mark: They do them not. They “shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” You see, the foundation for true assurance of salvation is obedience. It is *not* information.

Notice the selfdeception of these people in this passage. They believed all was well because they *knew* the word—even though they did not *keep* the word. Now people who don’t even *know* the

word—certainly, there’s no hope for *them*. But for those who *know* the word, but do not keep it, there’s equally no hope for them.

And you see, this is the deception that James speaks of in verse 22, when he says, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, *deceiving*”—*deceiving*—“your own selves.” You see, there is a great danger of selfdeception. The word here “deceived” means to deceive by means of false reasoning. It’s the idea of reasoning amiss, or alongside of the truth. And such people reason within themselves in this fashion: Because I *know* the truth, and because I *hear* the truth, therefore I’m safe.

Listen. Does knowing exactly where the fire escapes are in a burning building make you safe? No. You have to actually *take* the fire escapes in order to be safe. Now if you don’t even know where they are, of course you’re hopeless. But just *knowing* where they are doesn’t help either if you don’t go *get* on one and get *out* of the burning *building*.

And in the same way, just *knowing* the truth does not make you *safe*. There will be many people with accurate orthodoxy in hell. The people that Jesus speaks of in Matthew, chapter 7, were never accused of ignorance; they were never accused of heresy, or *misunderstanding*. Rather, they were accused of indolence, neglect, and selfdeception. Their attitude was, I can *know* the right things. I can even *say* the right things. But I can neglect to *do* the right things and still be safe. So one who has assurance of salvation while neglecting to act upon and obey the plain statements of Scripture is a selfdeceived person. It is only as Jesus says in John 8:31 that as we *continue* in His word that we can have any assurance that we are His disciples *indeed*, and not just in name or in word.

And so this business of obedience and assurance of salvation go hand in hand, because *true* salvation always and irrevocably produces obedience. In First John, chapter 2, verses 3 through 4, it says, “hereby we do know that we know him, *if we keep his commandments*. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a *liar*, and the truth is not in him.” And so those who claim to be Christians but disobey the commands of Christ, even though they know them, are no Christians. It’s as simple as that.

You know, it’s interesting to note that good works are *denied* as a basis of salvation. Ephesians 2:8 and 9, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *Not of works*, lest any man should boast.” And while good works are *denied* as the basis of salvation, they are *demand*ed as the result of salvation. For verse 10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before *ordained* that we should walk in them.”

So God says, These people are not *saved* on the basis of their works. They will *never* be saved on the basis of their works. But if they are saved, their lives will be *filled* with good works, because I’ve *ordained* it—that all of my children will walk in holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Hebrews, chapter 12.

So the means for avoiding selfdeception about our salvation is to realize that assurance of salvation is based, not on hearing the word or even *knowing* the word, but it is based upon a *doing* of the word. Well this, then, is the admonition given.

Notice in the second place this evening, the warning issued—the warning issued. Now the warning issued is found in verses 23 through 24. And the warning is issued in the form of an illustration. And the illustration is that of looking in a mirror. Notice, verse 23: “[I]f any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” Now someone who looks into a mirror and goes away and forgets what he saw is no better off than if had *never looked at all*. In other words, to look into a mirror is a waste of time if the beholder does *nothing* about what he saw in that mirror. He is as good off as if he had *never looked at all*.

Now why do you look in the mirror? Every one of you looked in a mirror today, I’m sure. You got up in the morning, and you went in the bathroom, and you looked in the mirror. Why did you do that? Why do you even *have* the things in your *house*? Well, the reason why you look in mirrors is to see if there is anything *wrong* with you so you can *fix* it before you go out for the remainder of the day. You comb your hair, you shave your beard, you adjust your clothing, you clean your face. And you would think it strange indeed if someone looked in the mirror, saw a number of things wrong, and did nothing to address the defects they saw, and just walked *away*. You would say, Why did he ever bother to look in the mirror at *all* if he’s not going to *do* something about what he *saw*?

Well in the same way, when the mirror of God’s word shows us our sins, when it shows us our duties, when it shows us our comforts, it is strange indeed if we go away from that presentation and do *nothing about it*. Why go and hear the word if you are going to do nothing about what you *hear*? This is what James is *saying*. If you go away from the preaching of the word the same as you came, and the word does not cause you to rearrange your behavior, cut off your sins, adjust your attitudes, then your attendance upon the preaching is only a selfdeception.

Notice if you will, Ezekiel 33, verses 30 through 32. You might want to turn there to the passage. The book of Ezekiel, chapter 33, verses 30 through 32. Now Ezekiel was the prophet to Israel while Israel was in captivity. And Israel was *in* captivity, of course, because of their prior refusal to hear the word of God. And, unfortunately, this attitude has not yet abated. Notice what God says to Ezekiel, about the attitude of people towards the preaching of the word. Ezekiel 33, verses 30 through 32. He says:

“Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they *will not do them*: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when

this cometh to pass,” referring to a destruction that he is predicting, “(lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.”

And so what we have here is we have people who regularly attend the preaching of the word of God, by a man of God, who *expounds* that word in such a way here that it is attractive, it is like a lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument. I mean, this is not some crummy preacher. This is a person who is able to set forth his words *well*, he sets them forth *clearly*, he puts them forth *attractively*, and he puts them forth *accurately*. He is a true spokesman of God.

And these people come and they act like the true people of God. They sit, they listen, they hear the word, they say, Oh, great preaching! Lovely outline! Good illustrations! Got to have a copy of that sermon! But they remain the same people that they were before they ever came and heard it. That’s the warning that is issued: That it is *possible* for people to come and hear a man of God present the word of God clearly, wonderfully, accurately, and attractively—and do nothing about it.

And this brings us thirdly this evening to the promise made. Having seen the admonition given: Be doers of the word and not hearers only, lest you deceive yourself *about* your salvation; and the warning issued: Don’t *be* like people who look in the mirror and do nothing about it—when you come to the preaching of the word, don’t go away and do nothing about what you heard. Then we have in the third place, the promise made.

Now if you’ll turn back to James, notice verse 25 and the very first word in verse 25. It says, “*But...*” Now this is a word of contrast. And he is saying, In contrast to this person who hears the word but he does nothing about it—who’s like the guy who looks in the mirror and doesn’t fix anything that he saw that was amiss—he says, But here’s a different kind of person. He says, “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty,” and that’s why we know the mirror, in verse 23, was the word of God, “and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer.”

And you see, forgetfulness with reference to what learned is a *__ offense. It is a lack of properly *valuing* the word of God. You know, when something’s really important to you, you don’t forget it. You remember it. And so when the word of God is truly of value to us, when it is more valuable than gold, yea, than much *fine* gold, sweeter also than the honey in the honeycomb, then we are not going to be forgetful hearers. But a *doer* of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Now we have here both sorts of people—the man in verse 23, and this man in verse 25. Both of them look into the word of God, they both hear good preaching, but one forgets what he hears, in terms of *putting* it into practice, while the other remembers, continues, and does what the word prescribes in its commands and laws. And the *promise* made to the *doer* of the work is that he and he alone is going to be blessed in his deeds. That is, the *blessing* comes not upon those who *hear* the word of God. The blessing comes not upon those who *know* the word of God. The blessing comes upon those who *do* the word of God, because he is blessed *in* his deed, that is, in the *context* of *doing* the deed of *obedience*.

People listen to preaching, and they say, Oh, the sermon was such a blessing! Look, the real blessing doesn't come from the sermon, but it comes from the *implementation* of what the sermon exhorts us to *do*. And it's nice to receive good teaching. But that's not where the blessing lies. The blessing lies when you actually go out and *implement* that teaching in your personal, moral *conduct*, in the way you treat other people, and in the way you relate to God, and in the way you function in society. *That's* where the real blessing *comes*.

Notice the words of Jesus in John 13 and verse 17. He said, after doing the footwashing thing with the disciples, He said, "If you *know* these things, happy are you if you *do* them." And the happiness is not in the knowing. The happiness is in the *doing*. Those who do the word of God are declared by Christ Himself to be people who are *especially* blessed. Notice what He says in the gospel of Luke, chapter 8, and in verses 19 through 21. In the gospel of Luke, chapter 8, verses 19 through 21, we see that Jesus's *family* members have come to pay Him a visit. And in Luke 8:19, it says:

"Then came to him"—that is, to Jesus—"his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press." There was this huge crowd around Him. "And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, *My* mother and *my* brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."

Now I've thought from time to time, you know, wouldn't it have been *neat* to have been one of Jesus's brothers, and to have been raised in that home, and to see Him grow up, and then watch Him throughout His life. What a phenomenal blessing. But do you know that those who hear His words and *do* it have the same degree of closeness and family relationship with Him that His own mother and brothers did? They are counted as intimate family members by Christ who *do His word*.

But more than that, not only are they blessed in that they are counted as intimate family members of Christ, but they are in a position of greater blessing than Christ's own *mother*. Notice Luke 11, verses 27 through 28. In this passage it says, "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." Now this is the first act of Mary worship. Notice Jesus's response. "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

In other words, Jesus is saying, Those who *keep* the word are more blessed and privileged and honored than Christ's *own mother*. Share this passage with a Roman Catholic sometime. If they're going to honor Mary, they need to honor all of those who hear the word of God and keep it at the same level of honor as they extend to her; in fact, at a higher level of honor, because they are blessed *rather*, that is, *more than* the very mother of Jesus herself.

Furthermore, not only are they counted as intimate family members of Christ, who keep the word; not only are they in a position of greater blessing than Christ's own *mother*, who keep the word; but those who keep the word of God are blessed with direct personal, intimate communion with the Father Himself. In John, chapter 14, and in verse 21, Jesus had this to say to His disciples. He said:

“He that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be *loved* of my Father, and *I* will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will *keep* my words: and *my Father* will love *him*, and *we* will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Now I don’t know all that that means, but I know whatever it means, it’s wonderful—that God and His Son would come and live with me if I would keep His words.

And so the promise made is that that man shall be blessed *in his* deed. As he remembers the word of God, continues in the word of God, and *does* the word of God, he’s incredibly blessed. He’s counted as a family intimate, he is closer to Christ than his *own* mother, and he has the personal fellowship and dwelling of God the Father and God the Son with himself.

And so on the one hand, those who don’t hear the word go to hell. And on the other hand, those who *do* the word have the highest of all privileges. And why do those who do not keep the word go to hell? Because by not *keeping* the word, they’re demonstrating that they never loved *Christ*. They never *believed* in Christ. The Scripture says, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *anathema*; that is, let him be accursed.

Well how do we know if we love the Lord Jesus? He says, “He that loveth me, keepeth my commandments.” He doesn’t say, He that loveth me *studieth* my commandments; he that loveth me *knoweth* my commandments; he that loveth me can *preach* my commandments. You know, there’s many preachers of orthodoxy, just like myself, who are going to go straight to hell, *too*. I mean, I have no assurance of salvation based on the fact that I am a pastor, and based on the fact that I proclaim God’s word, and based on the fact that I know theology. *None* of that is the grounds of my assurance of *salvation*. It’s only if I walk down from this pulpit and go out that door and *live* it, just like you have to live it, that there’s any basis of assurance. Because, see the people who prophesied in His name, He said, “Depart from me.”

And so the true proof of whether we know Him is, Do we keep His commandments? “Hereby do we know that we know him, if we *keep* His commandments.” He that saith, I know Him and keepeth *not* his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.” [1 John 2:3-4]

So the point is this, we need to examine ourselves and see whether we be in the faith by asking ourselves, Do I actually keep the words of God? Now none of us are going to keep them perfectly, but the question is, is do we keep them pervasively? That is, are they the dominating characteristic of our life and are we in constant pursuit of them, and seeking to do them as best we can, as much as we can, as often as we can, without any attitude of, Well, that’s good enough—I don’t have to do any more than that.

And so if we are going to be doers of the word, we must practically implement what we heard after we heard it. And so after the sermon, one of the ways we can assure ourselves that we are doers of the word is by discussing the implications and applications of that word with our *family*, assuming we have a family. If you’re single, sit down and have a conversation with *yourself*, and

say, Self, have you done anything or are you going to do anything about what you heard today? If so, what? How? When? And by what means? Be accountable to other people for what you should change and for what you should strengthen and reinforce and continue in. Ask, What specific action should I *take* in response to what has been said and taught?

And by going through this process, we can assure that we will not be those who say, Oh, you know, it was such a good sermon! And I say to people, Oh really? What was it about? Well, you know, heh-heh, why, it just slipped my mind. You know how many times I've heard that? People, you know, who go to another church, I say, What'd you hear? You know, What did the preacher preach on? Well, I don't know, but it was *good*. Just as well have not *gone*. Well, may the Lord help us be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Shall we pray together. Father, thank you so much for giving us the privilege of having your word in written form and in the form of preaching. Lord, we ask that you might help us to be good stewards of that which you have given to us. Lord, help us to not be selfdeceived, thinking that we can live a life of indifference to the word of God and still have a good outcome on the day of judgment.

On the other hand, Father, help us not to be overly discouraged this evening. You know the people who are here that know you and how their hearts long to do better, and how quickly we condemn ourselves as not having done *enough*. Oh Father, we do apply ourselves to the blood of Christ and to the grace of God, knowing that those who are your children, who are sincere but imperfect in their obedience, have the blood of Christ daily to cleanse them from sin.

Father, I pray that we might be zealous and press on towards the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, knowing all the time that our works are not the basis of our acceptance, but merely the fruit of it. And so, Father, may we do our works not to gain your favor, but may we do our works to show our love. For Father, our favor has been gained by Jesus Christ with you. Thank you for that.

Lord, I pray that you would deliver us from hypocrisy and help us to be real and honest with ourselves. And, Father, help us to be those who are Christ's disciple indeed because we are continuing in His word. Father, I pray that we would go away *encouraged* to do better, recognizing that in all of our shortfalls, you are working in us to will and to do of your good pleasure, to lift us up and carry us along and continue that good work which you have begun.

Father, help us then to live with a tender conscience and with an open heart before you, and confess our failures and draw *strength* from you in the pursuit of holiness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

* Page 7, line 2—gap.