

A Spiritual Checkup Part 2

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the first chapter of James, James 1, and as you turn, I want to say another word about the Good News Club. That may be new to some of you. It's a ministry that we started taking part in three years ago, the last three years at Chesney Elementary over just in south Duluth below the Gwinnett Place Mall on Norcross Road, and we didn't know much about it. We had a lady visit the church and share with me about the ministry and it's actually the opportunity to go in after school hours and preach the Gospel each week and the material, honestly, was surprisingly good. You know, a lot of times the material is just not very solid when you see parachurch ministries and stuff like that but this was just fantastic and we check it each year and the first three years have been really superb. So it's laid out so that it's very easy to be a part of the ministry. I mean, the teaching material is laid out for you. You could almost read it if you were able to read creatively enough to keep children engaged as you were reading. But it has been a fantastic ministry and we need people, if we don't have some people three or four or five more of you come up, we are going to lose that opportunity to minister. We'll have to say we can't do it.

So it is really urgent and we would like to ask you to pray about being part of that. It is Wednesday afternoons. I think it's about 8 or 10 Wednesdays in the fall and then about 10 or 12 Wednesdays in the spring. So it's like from October to November and then January to March and that's the window that we have with club time at the school. But it's a tremendous opportunity. We've seen some wonderful fruit from that in the lives of young people and I used to go out there a couple of times a year myself and it's a great blessing to see those kids and it is amazing to watch them listen, quiet down to hear the word of God. It's really supernatural. The Lord has done just the great work in that ministry. So if you would like to be a part of that, let us know. You can share with Jess or Melanie your interest in that.

So James 1. We are continuing our exposition of the book of James and we come this morning to the last verse in James 1, verse 27. We started looking at the last two verses last week under one title called "A Spiritual Checkup," I thought it would have been better to say a spiritual exam. You know, you have a physical exam, a spiritual exam. Anyway, we'll stay with a spiritual checkup since I already committed that way. If you would rather the exam, fine. A spiritual checkup. The idea is that James, we've seen he has a very pastoral heart and he is very practical in his teaching and in what he shares

with the people to whom he writes and he is concerned that they know where they stand with the Lord, where they truly are, and he offers at the end of this first chapter some tests that you can apply to your life and see how am I doing. Three tests among a number that he could have chosen but these three are excellent ways of looking at the true condition of the inner man, though they start at outward behavior. The intent of James is to get to the heart as we see when we look carefully at what he is talking about in this passage.

So it's a spiritual checkup and the series of three tests, we began last week in verses 26 and 27, he asks basically us to look at three different aspects of our lives and so let's read verses 19 to 27 to get the full context and we're going to really begin looking at 27 in the message this morning. James 1:19.

19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. 26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that now as we come to your word, that you would grant your grace. Lord, grant us grace to see and to understand wonderful things from your law that the entrance of your word might give light and in your light we might see light. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So a spiritual checkup. James begins that spiritual checkup in verse 26 by saying stick out your tongue, as it were. He says, "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue his religion is worthless." How do you know how your religion, that is your spiritual life, your commitment, your true piety before God, what is the reality of your profession? He says, "Examine your speech. Look at the things that are coming out your heart through your mouth. And if you are not able to bridle your tongue, your religion is worthless." That's what we looked at last time. We come in verse 27 to the next two tests, he turns it around a little bit and rather than talking about a man who thinks he's doing well he says this is what real spiritual health looks like, "Pure and

undefiled religion." James means this to be a picture of what our souls ought to be like. This is the man whose piety, whose reverence for God is where it ought to be. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God is two things: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Now, we're going to look at the first part of that this morning: pure and undefiled religion is to visit orphans and widows in their distress. The second test. When I first looked at this, I thought about using that metaphor of the doctor's visit, the regular checkup that we ought to take advantage of in our lives. I thought about the tongue and then the heart. Then as I was looking more carefully at this, I was reminded of something that Dr. Street shared last week in our conference on reconciliation, and that is that biblically compassion and mercy, these deeper emotions of the heart, are emotions of the soul to extend blessing and love, biblically they flow not from the heart but the picture in Scripture is from the bowels, which is not something that we are very familiar with at all. It's interesting, though, that even when they were translating the Bible into English, Tyndale and those that translated the King James Bible, it was still familiar enough that they translated literally things like Philippians 2:1, "If there are any bowels," if any compassion. If any bowels. I hope all of us have bowels otherwise we're in trouble, but Paul is using that to say, and he was using the literal word in Greek means bowels, and so the King James translators translated it bowels because the people they were writing to understood that the deep motions of the soul come from deeper than the heart; that the heart biblically is more the place of thinking, not so much the place of a feeling. When you think about that, it makes a lot of sense. I mean, when you are anxious, where do you feel that? In your gut. You know, ulcers develop in our gut. So the idea is stomach, intestines, kidney, liver. That's the word that biblically is pictured and so really what we're doing is we're having a bowel examination in this passage, and you really ought to do that, especially after you turn 50. But the Lord wants us to examine where we are in this particular area because this is a good window into the reality of the health of our inner man.

So with that said, let's consider this outline again under four points. The first is we're going to talk about what true health looks like, a picture of good health; and then we're going to use the same three points I had after that first point last week which are: the test, the result and the treatment.

So, first, a picture of good health. Pure and undefiled religion begins verse 27. Pure and undefiled religion. It's interesting in the word order in the original, James is really making emphasis on the word "religion." The last word of verse 26 in the Greek is the word "religion," translated "religion," and the first word of verse 27 is the word "religion," so that verse 26 ends with this man's, that which belongs to this man, worthless is religion, and then religion which is pure and undefiled in the sight of our God is this. When that happens, there is an emphasis being placed on the word. There is kind of a chiasm that draws your attention. James is using this word "religion" in a very positive way. Sometimes it could be used to focus merely on external religion but that's not what James is talking about. He sees more the idea from which this word came from. It's a rare word in the Scriptures but it came from the idea from a verb which means "to fear; to be

troubled; to be frightened." So fear is associated with worship and we see that in other places, to fear God. Jess read earlier from Deuteronomy 10, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear him, to revere him. So it is that sense of fear which leads to outward exercises and movements of worship. So James sees this as true piety but the evidence of it is seen externally in life. It's not a theoretical faith that James is about. It is a real living Christian commitment, a real living commitment to Christ.

So religion that is pure and undefiled, that's what he wants us to strive for. And these two words, the adjectives that we have here, pure and undefiled in verse 27, paint a word picture that would have been very familiar to his audience. Remember that James is writing primarily with Jewish believers in view. He's writing to those who have been dispersed abroad as he says in verse 1, the 12 tribes, the Jewish believers who have been spread abroad through persecution, many of whom were spread from Jerusalem under his own ministry. And he writes to them to encourage them in their faith and he knows that they well know about the Old Testament and the Old Testament system of worship. They know the books of the law so that the word that he uses, "pure" here, was very familiar to them. The Greek word that he uses for "pure," it appears hundreds of times in the Old Testament and many of the times in the Old Testament it is translated, hundreds of times in the Old Testament in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint. James uses the word "kathara" which means "clean."

So when he says pure and undefiled, he's saying clean and undefiled, and if you have read through Leviticus lately, you've seen that word a number of times, that which is clean, that which is fit for the presence of God. When you have touched a dead person, you become unclean for a period of time until you have fulfilled the obligations of cleanness. That is, you can't go into the temple. Certain illnesses made a person unclean. Foods could make you unclean. You were to eat clean food, that is, foods that God had said are right for you to eat. In all these ways, the Lord was teaching us. I mean, dietary laws are not for us today, that was a means the Lord used to teach us about what true worship was about. As John Calvin said, in the Old Testament God was prattling with us, baby-talking. You talk with a child in ways that you don't talk with an adult. You come down to their level and you use phrases and forms that they can understand.

So there is a sense in which in progressive revelation, that's what was happening. The Lord gave the picture of, I mean, can you imagine what it was like, in the Old Testament if we had lived under that dispensation in the plan of God as faithful Jews, we would not have been able to eat one of my favorite foods, shrimp, because it is unclean food, and that would have been a disappointment, although you wouldn't know it if you were a Jew because you wouldn't have been wanting to eat shrimp anyway, there wasn't any shrimp around, thankfully. But it was not that there was anything inherently bad about shrimp, God was teaching us that food, the worship of the Lord is so important that it ought to be on our minds even when it comes down to what we eat. Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, so that they had to think about what they ate as it related to their fellowship with the Lord. It was to consume their life because God wants us to love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, with all our

strength, and in the old covenant before the Spirit was given, that was a way to teach his people that.

But this idea of clean and unclean was one of those ways it continued to run through their experience. To be clean was to be fit for the presence of God and so James writes to those who were raised as faithful Jews who now were following Jesus, and he uses terms that created a word picture for them. To be pure and undefiled, to be clean and undefiled was to be able to go into the presence of God, to go to the temple to worship, to appear in Jerusalem before the Lord at the various feasts. Pure and undefiled religion is this and so he pictures a man, this is what a man who walks with God, this is what a man who is in the presence of God looks like and a Christian should be a person who walks with the Lord. So he says this is what we are to look like.

"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father," and he gives us the next two tests and we are going to look at the first test, "to visit orphans and widows in their distress." So we talked about what a healthy believer looks like, now the test, "to visit orphans and widows in their distress." He says that if your heart is right with the Lord and you are in the presence of God and you are walking in a loving relationship with the Lord, you are where you should be; that now no longer are you worried about what you have to do to go to the temple but the temple of God is within you because of what Christ has done. The Spirit is within you, you are walking with him. This is what you ought to look like.

We ought to be someone who visits orphans and widows in their distress. He picks a very familiar image particularly at that period of time that was so important where they didn't have all the social programs that we have today. An orphan and widow were in great peril in first century society and so he says believers should be those who have great compassion for the orphan and the widow.

Now, to visit, let's look at this little more carefully. To visit, the verb here means, it's from the root idea of the same word for episcopal or episcopos. Visit actually means to look upon; to examine. That's the literal meaning of this word. So "to visit" means "to look upon, to examine, to closely inspect, to observe." So it has the idea of "tend, to take care of." So we need to be people who are concerned about the welfare of the helpless among us; that those who are in great need, that our hearts are moved so that we find ourselves going and we are diligent to go and to check upon them, to look after them, to care. In fact, the verb is in the Greek present tense which we know it means the Greek present tense is more about the kind of action than the time of action. It's not so much that it's the present time as it is continuous ongoing action. So he says pure and undefiled religion, that is a person who is walking with the Lord, who is abiding in Christ. This is what they are going to look like in a continual ongoing way, they have a heart that is concerned to look after those in need around them.

He pictures orphans and widows. Orphans and widows. Orphans, of course, those who have no parents, no one to care for them. Widows, women bereaved of their husbands. In their distress, literally in their crushing, in their time of crushing. The weight of the

world, the weight of their affliction is crushing them. This is where we need to be there ministering to them, caring for them. He said this is what a person who walks with God truly looks like. They are not able to stand idly by and watch those who are weak and helpless suffer and not be moved to compassionate action. Their hearts are moved in the same way that God's heart is moved. God is moved toward the helpless.

We read from Deuteronomy earlier, chapter 10, verse 18. It says this, speaking of the Lord, "God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing." It's the nature of our God. That's right after he says, "the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God." This is what the great and the mighty and the awesome God does. He sees the widow, the orphan, the alien, and he takes care of them. Isn't that amazing?

You know, this word "orphan" actually the Greek word comes from an adjective which means "obscure and dark." Our English word "orphan" is a transliteration of the Greek word "orphanos" and it comes from the adjective "orphanos" which means "obscure and dark." It means those who wander in obscurity and darkness. The sense of helplessness and hopelessness, no one loving them, looking after them. God loves those people like that.

You see this again and again as you read through Deuteronomy. In fact, if you turn to chapter 10, just turn over to chapter 14 and verse 28 because the Lord wants his people to be like him. We said that the great and the awesome God looks after the orphan and the widow and the alien, look what he says in chapter 14, verse 28, "At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town. The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do." He says, "If you don't take care of those people, I'm not taking care of you." The Lord cares deeply for those.

You see it again in chapter 16. For me, I don't even turn my page of my Bible over. In verse 10 when he talks about the celebration of the Festival of Weeks, "Then you shall celebrate," 16:10, "the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes." That is, you bring the food in and you celebrate the feast so that these people can enjoy it too, the Lord continually encouraging his people to look to those who are helpless.

One of the most beautiful concepts in Scripture is the fact that God and his compassion and his lovingkindness for the weak and helpless. When we were studying the book of

Ruth last fall, think about that. What is the story of Ruth? The story of Ruth is the story of God's compassion for two widows, particularly Naomi, the main widow, but also for Ruth. His lovingkindness toward them. He sees them in their great distress and the Lord has chesed, that is lovingkindness, sometimes translated "steadfast love" by the ESV. I think they miss it on that. Lovingkindness is a better translation of the word. Lovingkindness, because it's basically the blending, chesed is the blending of mercy and grace and love. It's the idea that you see someone in misery, you have the power to help and you don't sit idly by but you move toward them. God's chesed is his lovingkindness. It's the fact that he sees you in need and his heart is moved with kindness and compassion and tender mercy.

This is the God that we serve and he says we are to be like him. How wonderfully he cares for Ruth and Naomi. Remember the concept of Levirate marriage. They are both widows and the story of Boaz taking Ruth as his wife, fulfilling the responsibility of Levirate marriage, that is when there is a woman in the family who is a widow with no children, that the nearest male kinsman becomes the kinsman redeemer, buys back her land, takes her as his wife to raise up offspring, because a woman without children had no future. A woman without a man had no future in ancient Israel and so the concept of Levirate marriage was there by God's grace, and so Boaz is the kinsman redeemer. He's the family member, extended family member that can then draw near and redeem her and redeem the land. That's a beautiful picture of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, our Kinsman Redeemer. "Since the children share in flesh and blood, he also partook of the same that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death and deliver them who through fear of death were held in slavery all their lives." That's a picture of the kinsman redeemer. You see, we shared in flesh and blood, he drew near to us and became our kinsman, taking our own flesh and blood so that he could deliver us from slavery and bring us to himself.

So this is what God is like, he said this is what we are to be like, and the word "chesed" is a beautiful picture of what God is like and an interesting thing I discovered some time in the last couple of years was that the word for "godly" in the Old Testament, you know, you want to be a godly man, and the Old Testament word "godly" would be something similar to what James is meaning by the word "religious" here. To be religious is to be godly, to be reverent, to be like God. The Old Testament word for "godly" is the word "chasid," which is a form of the word "chesed." That the godly are those who are like God in chesed, that is, they see people around them in need and their hearts are moved with compassion. Like Father, like Son.

So we are called to be like that and James says this is the test, do you care for those who are in great need around you? And do you care for them in action? Are you truly moved to action? This is where, again, so many things in our world and society that confuse us. The idea of love, such a misunderstood word in all culture but especially it seems in American culture. Biblically, love is an action. Love is not an emotion, it's an action, and it is rooted and it comes from the inner person but it's an action. In fact, in that wonderful passage in 1 Corinthians 13, "love is patient, love is kind," those are actually verbs. It doesn't sound that way in English but it really is. Love is patient is love suffers long.

Love is kind, love acts with kindness. That's really what is closer to what is said there in the original. Sixteen verbs one after another. Love does this. Love does this. Love does this. Love does this. Love does this. So if we have come to know the love of God and we love, then we should be demonstrating our love not in word but in deed, not in word only but also in deed.

So that's the test, now the result. How do you and I measure up? How are we doing? The result. The third point. When you look at this last week, how many times have we reached out to someone in need? How many times have we walked by those who are in need and didn't even notice? It can even be in our family, right? I mean, people are hurting and we just don't notice, but especially those outside of our family, and especially those in the body of Christ. We are to love our brothers and sisters and we are to have a heart like God. How are we doing in that?

A lot of times we can think we are doing pretty well, we look at our religious activity, "Well, I went to church Sunday. I went to church Wednesday. I showed up for Bible study. Read my Bible five out of seven days this week. Had time in prayer." But James says that's not the true defining mark of a believer. Those things are all important, every one of them are very important, but the mark that those things are really producing, the spiritual result is this kind of love and compassion where people around us in need when we have a sensitivity to it and our hearts are moved to action, to move toward people.

1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And look at what John says next, "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

It's so easy to be busy in life, isn't it? I mean, we find it difficult to take the time we need to spend reading the word. We talked about how hard it is to focus in today's age where you are just constantly barraged with information. I mean, now our cell phones remind us that we just got an email. Even that, little noises it makes, and I don't know how to fix it. I have to take it to Maggie, "Hey, stop this noise thing it's doing." Jonathan has to help me out. But it is constant. That's an interruption. Whatever you were thinking about, suddenly there is a message that just came in. Is that my text message or is that my voicemail or is that my email? And we pick up the phone. Information overload all the time and we're needing to devote ourselves to the word of God and to prayer and to seeking the Lord and to loving his people and we have to have time to be sensitive; we have to take time and be intentional about looking around us.

The old saying goes: take time to smell the roses. We also need to take time to just be sensitive to what needs are around me right now. "Lord, who can I serve right now?" That should be our mindset and that's the mindset of someone who is like Jesus. I mean, the Lord Jesus Christ, he was not too busy to care and his life was so much infinitely

more difficult than ours. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He lived his life being rejected and despised and yet he did not retreat from people, even in that, he continued to move to meet needs, listening always to his Father, communing with his Father, and looking to do good around him. And the wonderful thing is when we really are walking with him and we are loving him, we will be like Jesus. That's what James is saying. You know, Jesus looked out at a crowd, he didn't see a bunch of people as obstacles, Matthew 9 says he looked at the crowd as those who were helpless and harassed like sheep without a shepherd. His heart was moved with compassion. James wants us to consider that and to let that question linger, "How am I really doing in caring for people around me?"

That's the result then, fourthly, the treatment. The treatment. You see, we have a problem and the reality is that we all have a problem to some degree because none of us is like Christ like we ought to be, but if the problem is severe, if we really look at these things and we say, "I don't ever see myself being moved with compassion. I don't have concern for people." If you are always about yourself all the time and you are unable to get out of yourself to care about others, that's a warning light, a real concern, and James says that this is just as bad as the person who can't control his tongue, your religion is worthless because what God is looking for is a religion, a commitment, godliness, that cares about others. And the treatment for some is to say, "Have I ever seen myself as truly helpless and hopeless?" because I mentioned earlier chesed and chasid, that the person who is godly, chasid, is the person who has received chesed, and when you have received the love of Christ truly, you are able to give it. We love because he first loved us. We love him and we love one another because he first loved us. So if I'm unable to love as Jesus loves, perhaps it's because I have never truly experienced his love. That's what John was saying in 1 John 3, how can the love of God abide in a person like that?

And James is saying to us that there are religious people who have an outward testimony of spirituality but many of those, their testimony does not match the reality because there is not real spiritual life animating them. And if you are thinking this morning, "Lord, where am I?" Ask yourself, "Have you truly ever seen yourself as helpless and hopeless without any measure of hope in yourself?" If you have never done that, if you have never been there, then you could not have received the love of Christ. Jesus begins the Beatitudes with, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is at the very first mark of the true believer is poverty of spirit; to see yourself before God as completely worthless and hopeless, nothing to bring to God. And if you have never been there, you need to ask God to take you there. You need to get in his word and keep looking at things like his word lays out here and seeing the poverty, that there really is nothing here, "Lord, I need you. There is nothing to commend me to you." For when you realize there is nothing truly in and of ourselves, that our righteousness is as filthy rags as Isaiah says, that we cannot tout our resumes, that there is nothing, no hope for us but to cling to Christ and the cross, that's where salvation comes. You realize that Jesus has paid for our selfishness, our wickedness. He has taken our wrath. He bore it in his body on the cross and you cry out to him for salvation and he saves. He is mighty to save.

So the treatment may be to truly be saved, but for those who believe they are believers and who see just the great distance between where we ought to be and where we are, what's the treatment look like for us if we are failing to be doers of the word? We are hearing but not doing. There is a deficiency in this area. We're not caring for those that we ought to be caring for, loving, visiting, looking after the weak. This doesn't just mean those who are financially strapped or lacking in the things of this world, it also means those who are in agony spiritually. It means anyone in great need in helplessness and hopelessness. Is your heart moving toward them? When we see that it is not as it ought to be, what do you do? What does a believer do? We keep coming back to what James is doing here in verse 25. That's the key, that we need to keep looking intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, abiding by it so that we now become effectual doers, faithful doers of the word.

When we see an area of deficiency, when God shows us one, when he brings his word, the perfect law of liberty comes up and you look into it, the image that he used in that verse and previously with the idea of a looking glass, you look into the mirror of the word of God and we see what is terribly wrong, for the Christian, that's a good place to be. It's a painful place to be but it's a good place to be and the key is that we don't leave too quickly and forget what we saw. The key is that we remain under it. Remember, we talked about this, verse 25, the one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and continues in it. We see, "Where is my compassion, where is my mercy? How can I be so hardhearted? What am I supposed to look like?" And you start looking at Jesus, the Kinsman Redeemer, and you stay there and you meditate.

James Manton actually pointed out an interesting thing, James Manton, an English Puritan from the seventeenth century, pointed out that interestingly all of the clean animals in Leviticus are animals that chew the cud. Like, just telling a little bit in kind of a subliminal way almost that we need to be people who chew the cud. Remember, we saw last week that meditation is about chewing the cud, it's about chewing and chewing and chewing, just like the animals, sheep and cows that regurgitate what they have eaten and keep on chewing it. And in the process of chewing, the saliva continuing to mix with that food, they are breaking down the particles so that microscopic bacteria and fungi can colonize more areas around those pieces of grass, and as those colonies grow and multiply, then they receive 70 percent of their calories from the chewing process. I was thinking about this, another argument against vegetarianism, honestly, that cows, a cow doesn't get to weigh 1,250 pounds by eating just grass. He has to have his protein too, 70 percent of his diet, protein and fat from those bacteria. Anyway, sorry, I always look for an opportunity to shoot down vegetarianism when I can.

But the idea is you take a passage, you take an issue like this, "I'm not as compassionate as I need to be, Lord, where is my heart?" Then you get into the word and you keep looking at that. You make that an issue that you're going to work on and you're going to stay in the word and you going to let the word do its heart surgery. "Lord, I need you to change me. I need to be like Jesus." So you go to the word and you see yourself and what does the word do? It shows us where we are wrong but also as we look in the perfect law, the law of liberty, we see God, we see Christ, and in seeing him, we see our Savior. We

see how much we need a Savior. "Lord, I need a Savior. How could I be so calloused and hardhearted and insensitive?" We wonder at our lack of true spirituality. "Lord, what is going on with me?" And as we are broken, as the word breaks us down, it makes us look at Christ and we see, "I need a Savior. I need the blood of Christ to wash me and I need to be like Jesus. Lord Jesus, forgive me. Cleanse me from my selfishness and make me like you." And start thinking about Jesus. You know, I need to think less about myself, more about others.

So what does Paul do in Philippians 2? "Look not out for your own interest but also for the interest of others. Have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Paul says, "Look, you've got a problem. You're looking out for your own interests, not for the interests of others." He doesn't just say, "So look out for the interest of others. That's all I've got to say. Do it." He says, "Do it by looking at Jesus. Look at Jesus who although existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but took upon himself the form of a servant." Jesus who was God himself, did not hold onto his position but he became a servant to bless and serve us. And we look at Jesus drawing near to us and realize that even in the moment as we are broken over our sin before the Lord, crying out to him, we find him draw near to us in that moment, and in receiving his grace and the wonder of his love, that if we just received as someone who is so needy and so helpless and so hopeless ourselves, the joy of receiving that love again energizes us to go out and to give it to others.

But we also need to go and do it. We are not just doing the right thing because we know it's the right thing, we're doing the right thing by looking at the word and looking at Christ. It's important that we do the right thing before we feel like doing the right thing. You look at the word, you see what Jesus is and you go and you do what he would want you to do. You don't wait until you feel like it. "Lord, I need to have more compassion. I need to be more merciful. I don't feel very merciful so I'm going to wait until I feel merciful." No, do not wait. You will never get there. Obey, looking at Jesus, trusting in Jesus. "Lord, I don't feel compassion like I ought to. I don't know what I should say but I know I need to move toward this person. They are upset, they are hurt, I would rather ignore it. I would rather just say, 'Hello, how are you?' and move on. Or I wouldn't even say how are you, maybe I don't need to ask that question." You feel like that sometimes, right? "Hi," and you move on. But when the Lord convicts you, "That person is in distress, I need to move toward them but I don't have anything right now to give them, Lord. I don't feel anything toward them. But Lord Jesus, you do. You are our Kinsman Redeemer and you live in me and you can work through me and so I'm going to just say, 'Hello, how are you doing really?'" And as we obey, then the feelings follow and as we let the word of God redirect as, we become more and more pure and undefiled in our religion and healthier because it's the word of God that is fueling everything. Loving Christ and waiting on his word; so how are we doing in this area, concern for those in need? The answer is to look to Jesus.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the Gospel. We thank you that it is your nature to look to those in need and to be moved with compassion and if anyone will call upon the name of Jesus, repenting, trusting in him, you will save them. Father, help us to be more like our Savior. Help us to have his compassionate heart, his shepherd's heart. Father, make us what you want us to be. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.