

## James 1:19-27 Sermon Notes

- Notes
  - James 1:19
  - James 1:20
    - “James is insisting that human wrath does not create the righteousness that can be offered or directed to God, the righteousness that we are called to live out on earth and that he demands from his followers.”<sup>1</sup>
    - It is important to note that James is not saying all anger is bad!
      - “James falls into the wisdom genre at this point. And wisdom sayings are notorious for the use of apparently absolute assertions in order to make a general, “proverbial” point.... Human anger is not usually pleasing to God, leading as it does to all kinds of sins. But to conclude that anger is always wrong would be to overinterpret James’s generalizing proverb.”<sup>2</sup>
  - James 1:21
    - “These moral failures and taints of evil in our character are the grime and muck that we need to remove from ourselves as readily as taking off filthy clothes after a long day working or playing outside in the mud.”<sup>3</sup>
    - This is why we never see Jesus lose it on the disciples... because he was behaving righteously with them.
    - *Humbly* accept the word *planted in you*
      - Humility was not seen as a virtue when this was written, it isn’t something you need to be successful in today’s world. But it is one of the key words used to describe Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11).
      - This word was planted in us once we know who Jesus is...
    - “The “word” of the gospel, therefore, is fully able to sustain and mature us, from the beginning of our relationship with Christ to the culmination of salvation in the eschaton”<sup>4</sup>
    - James wants us to take off our filthy, grimey, clothes of the flesh, and is encouraging us to put on the clothes of the word of God. This type of language reminds me of Ephesians 6, where Paul is talking about putting on the armor of God. Paul encourages us to put on the breastplate of righteousness—or in other words, put on Christ. If we want to continue walking with the Lord, we must both take off our sinful clothes and put on the righteous clothes that can only be given to us by Christ.
  - James 1:22
    - Listening is important! And not half listening—full listening!
      - Parents in the room, I’m sure one thing that drives you completely insane is when you feel like your kid isn’t listening to you. There are times I am working with the students here and I think they aren’t paying attention to me, so I ask them to repeat what I said thinking “gotcha!” But they perfectly recite what I was saying—even though they weren’t giving me their undivided attention. We all know that type of listening is not going to cut it! We need to take in every

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<sup>1</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 86.

<sup>2</sup> Moo, 111

<sup>3</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 89.

part of God's Word to us! Parents, we need to listen to God's word as if our life depended on it!

- James 1:23-25
  - Martin adds that “what is seen in a mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial,” for example, a dirty face that needs washing. Yet here this person goes away and fails to deal with the flaws that the mirror revealed.<sup>5</sup>
    - When I woke up this morning, one of the first things I did was look in the mirror. When I looked in the mirror, I did not think, “man, I look so good right now, I could preach like this.” Instead, I used what I saw in the mirror to fix myself up. If we read Scripture without thinking there is anything in our life that we need to do, we are missing something!
  - James warns against the error of forgetfulness. We are not supposed to forget the Word of God.
    - Forgetfulness is something that is constantly stressed in the Old and New Testament. It's easy for us to look back at the Israelites and think, “how could they forget how God delivered them out of Egypt?” but James is telling us here that we do the same thing when we do not do what the Word says!
- James 1:26-27
  - “And, of course, the overall simple point of these verses—that true religion is manifested in a lifestyle of obedience to God”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, vol. 16, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 90.

<sup>6</sup> Moo, 125

## Script

### I. Intro

- a. It is an honor for me to preach with you today on this beautiful 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend. I've had the honor of preaching in this sanctuary two other times this year: the Sunday of spring break and the first Sunday of the year on New years day... Needless to say I am keeping my Labor Day weekend free because something tells me I may be up here again for that
- b.
- c. The older I get the more I realize how little I truly know. Growing up a pastor's kid, I truly believed I has the world all figured out. It wasn't until I was humbled that I truly realized how much I had to learn.
- d. What humbled me? You may wonder that. Without hesitation, the book of James is always the thing I point to that humbled me.
  - i. As I work with the students here, I often will point this book out to the ones that want to go deeper with their faith and be changed. Before I send them to study this book, I warn them that it will be convicting and humbling.
- e. Main Point: God's Word should humble us to change the way we speak, listen and act.
- f. Organizational Sentence
  - i. Today as we look at the end of James Chapter 1, we are going to learn *WHAT* behavior James considers to be spiritually wholesome, *HOW* we are supposed to gain this behavior and *WHY* this behavior is important.
- g. TRANSITION: so lets read the first section of our passage and see WHAT James thinks Christian living looks like: READ JAMES 1:19-21

### II. *The What-* James 1:19-21

- a. The best and worst part about James is that he will not leave you wondering what you are supposed to do. But what he is telling us to do often is very convicting and hard—which is why I tend to include a warning when I recommend this book to people. I do not need to spend much more time on WHAT we think James wants us to do, it is clear as day.
  - i. If James was one of the founding fathers of our country, he would be John Hancock.
- b. Before we go any further, **it is worth noting that James is not saying that all anger is bad.** We know this for two reasons:
  - i. Jesus was recorded to be angry multiple times throughout the Gospels: Lazarus account, his response to Peter— “get back satan!”—and most famously the account of Jesus flipping tables
  - ii. James's style of writing is the closest thing we find to New Testament wisdom literature. One commentator clarifies that wisdom literature often times uses absolutes to make a proverbial statement.
- c. Instead, James is warning us that most of the time, anger leads us to bad places. So, the stuff that usually angers us can lead us to unrighteous behavior.
  - i. This is why we never see Jesus lose it on the disciples... because he was behaving righteously with them.
- d. Moving to verse 21, James uses tense language to both remind and warn us about sin in our lives.
  - i. When I see words like filth, my mind goes back to when my parents would make me do chores around the house. My brother and I were disgusting, and we were responsible for cleaning our filthy bathroom. Our parents would quickly remind us that we need to use some elbow grease to truly clean the house. Our sinful desires need to have the same attention and intensity as elbow grease if we want to remove it.
  - ii. The word that can be found in between the middle of this verse is humbly. *Humbly* accept the word *planted in you*

1. Humility was not seen as a virtue when this was written, it isn't something you need to be successful in today's world. But it is one of the key words used to describe Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11).
2. This word was planted in us once we know who Jesus is, and what he did for us...
- iii. The Word was planted in us by Jesus and his work on the cross. James makes this clear by telling us that this word 'saves us'.
- iv. James wants us to take off our filthy, grimey, clothes of the flesh, and is encouraging us to put on the clothes of the word of God.
  1. This type of language reminds me of Ephesians 6, where Paul is talking about putting on the armor of God. Paul encourages us to put on the breastplate of righteousness—or in other words, put on Christ. If we want to continue walking with the Lord, we must both take off our sinful clothes and put on the righteous clothes that can only be given to us by Christ.
- e. TRANSITION: So it is very clear WHAT James wants us to do, as we look at the next section, James tells us HOW we can accomplish this... READ James 1:22-25

### III. *The How-* James 1:22-25

- a. James makes our HOW very clear: by doing what the Word says. He quickly makes it clear that just mere listening is not enough..
  - i. Listening is important! And not half listening—full listening!
    1. Parents in the room, I'm sure one thing that drives you completely insane is when you feel like your kid isn't listening to you. There are times I am working with the students here and I think they aren't paying attention to me, so I ask them to repeat what I said thinking "gotcha!" But they perfectly recite what I was saying—even though they weren't giving me their undivided attention. We all know that type of listening is not going to cut it! We need to take in every part of God's Word to us! Parents, we need to listen to God's word as if our life depended on it!
  - ii. In this analogy, James warns against the error of forgetfulness. We are not supposed to forget the Word of God.
    1. Forgetfulness is something that is constantly stressed in the Old and New Testament. It's easy for us to look back at the Israelites and think, "how could they forget how God delivered them out of Egypt?" But James is telling us here that we do the same thing when we do not do what the Word says!
- b. James then uses the picture of a mirror to tell us we need to be doers of the word.
  - i. Mirrors can show us what needs to be changed.
    1. When I woke up this morning, one of the first things I did was look in the mirror. When I looked in the mirror, I did not think, "man, I look so good right now, I could preach like this." Instead, I used what I saw in the mirror to fix myself up. If we read Scripture without thinking there is anything in our life that we need to do, we are missing something!
  - ii. In this analogy, James warns against the error of forgetfulness. We are not supposed to forget the Word of God.
    1. Forgetfulness is something that is constantly stressed in the Old and New Testament. It's easy for us to look back at the Israelites and think, "how could they forget how God delivered them out of Egypt?" But James is telling us here that we do the same thing when we do not do what the Word says!
- c. So, HOW do we achieve the behavior James wants for us? We study the Word and allow it to change the way we act!
  - i. This is the response James commends in verse 25!
- d. James does not want us to deceive ourselves.
  - i. This happens when we are exposed to Scripture, and nothing in its words changes us.
    1. Can you think of a time in your life when a portion of Scripture changed you? What was it, and how did it change your life?
- e. TRANSITION: For me, our next verse is something that forever changed the way I acted. As we move on to our final section today, we will see WHY James wants us to behave this way. READ James 1:26-27

### IV. *The Why-* James 1:26-27

- a. Here is the WHY: Good Christ followers live their lives in obedience to God. Or in other words: Good Christians live out their faith, and everyone around them can see it.
- b. These final two verses give us a roadmap to what to expect from the rest of the book, so some would say these verses do a good job summing up the message of the book of James.
- c. When I was 18 years old, I went to a one-year Bible Institute in the northern woods of Wisconsin at my favorite place in the world: Silver Birch Ranch.
  - i. There I began to study the Word of God on my own and it began a work in my life that still affects me to this day. I had a strong faith in the Lord, but up until this point, I don't think I ever truly allowed Scripture to change my life. Until I read James 1:26. I'll never forget, I woke up early in the morning, grabbed a canoe and read the book of James with only the sunrise and still water accompanying me. It was a very quaint setting, but this verse pierced my soul and changed me. I looked in the mirror and realized that my tongue was not something I was using to lift up God, instead it was something I used to lift myself up. It was like James was looking straight at me when he wrote this verse "those who consider themselves religious." That was me! I took pride in the fact that I was pastor's kid, and that I spent so much time at church and with Christian community. But I did not have even a slight rein on my tongue.
  - ii. After I brought my canoe back to shore, I realized that I need to take inventory on the things that I said, and how I said it.

## Outline

- I. Intro
  - a. Labor day joke, I love to preach because I learn, humbled, James
  - b. Series, students and James context

ORGANIZATIONAL SENTENCE: Today as we look at the end of James Chapter 1, we are going to learn *WHAT* behavior James considers to be spiritually wholesome, *HOW* we are supposed to gain this behavior and *WHY* this behavior is important.

TRANSITION: So, let's read the first section of our passage and see WHAT James thinks Christian living looks like: READ JAMES 1:19-21

- II. The *What* James 1:19-21
  - a. James is not a puzzle, he is very clear. Our WHAT can be found by just reading these verses
    - i. **God's Word should humble us to change the way we speak, listen and act.**
  - b. James is not condemning all anger- Jesus was angry, James's style is proverbial
    - i. He is just saying that human anger can lead to unrighteousness—this is why Jesus never snapped at the disciples
  - c. v 21-filth requires elbow grease, humility is at the middle of the verse
    - i. Humility was not a virtue in the world at this time—but Jesus had it--Phil 2
    - ii. The work of Jesus on the cross is what *plants* the word in us
    - iii. God is not building a cottage—he is building a palace...

TRANSITION: So it is very clear WHAT James wants us to do, as we look at the next section, James tells us HOW we can accomplish this... READ James 1:22-25

- III. The *HOW* James 1:22-25
  - a. **The How is more than just listening...** But its important—when you listen 100%-Illustration
  - b. We must be doers of the word! Mirrors—shows us what need to be changed—illustration
    - i. Warning against forgetfulness—that is for us not just OT!
  - c. v 25 makes our **HOW very clear: Study Scripture so that it changes your behavior.**
  - d. Question we should all answer: How has Scripture changed your behavior?

TRANSITION: For me, our next verse is something that forever changed the way I acted. As we move on to our final section today, we will see WHY James wants us to behave this way. READ James 1:26-27

- IV. The *WHY* James 1:26-27
  - a. **Here is the WHY: Good Christ followers live their lives in obedience to God**
  - b. v 26 changed my life and showed me where I wasn't obedient- NBI Story
  - c. Warning: The rest of James is going to hit most of what these two verses talk about
    - i. So we will most likely be convicted by the content of the series. But that's good!

Comments:

One emphasis is that James is encouraging us to live for other people—the orphans and the widows. When we live our lives for just ourselves, we fall into the habit of not reining in our tongues and being quick to anger. So James is encouraging us to live our lives for other people.

Intro—maybe refer to yourself the holiday preacher

Have a statement like: before reading James my faith looked like X, but now that I have studied this book my faith looks like Y

Maybe find an example of how getting the filth out of our lives look—find an illustration for that

Bring out a joke when talking about the mirror

What is the perfect law that brings freedom? Maybe take some time to explain this

Touch on how weird this passage ends

Use the main idea!!

Recognize that this is a hard passage

What most excited about this passage? Is that clear?

What objections or hesitations do you think the audience will have?

What's your primary prayer for those who hear this sermon?

How does this passage point us to the Gospel and heal us?

<sup>19</sup>My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup>because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. <sup>21</sup>Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

<sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

<sup>26</sup>Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

<sup>27</sup>Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.