

Day 1

Scripture: James 1:1-4

¹James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Devotional

What a way to start a letter! James comes out of the gate telling us to do the one thing that we typically do not think of doing when we run into trials of any kind. James realizes that the trials in our lives are there for a purpose. He sees them as God-ordained stepping stones that are designed to lead us to a better understanding of who God is. We know that God is good, and if a trial is from Him, that trial is ultimately for our good. It may not always seem like that, but we can trust the Lord to have a deeper meaning behind the things that are happening in our lives. The more our faith is tested, the stronger it can become. Think of how a sword is forged. It requires heat and pressure. Without those things, the sword would be weak and useless. It isn't until the pressure is applied that we see the sword become what it is supposed to be. The same is true for the Christian life. Without a little pressure, we'll be stuck and fall short of who we were made to be.

Questions

1. Have you ever thought about thanking God for the trials in your life?
2. What is the difference between a temptation and a trial?
 - a. A temptation is from Satan that tries to lure you from your faith. A trial is something from the Lord that is meant to build your faith.
3. Can you think of one trial in your life where you could clearly see God use the trial to build up your faith?

Day 2

Scripture: James 1:5-8

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Devotional

God is the source of all wisdom. If He is the source of wisdom, that means that He is the giver of wisdom. I have heard countless students tell me that they feel like they aren't as close to God or know as much about God as they would like. I often ask them if they have actually asked God to make Himself known to them. Usually the answer is no. Have you ever thought about asking the Lord to reveal Himself to you? That is a prayer that our God cannot ignore. This doesn't mean that you will instantly know everything about God after 1 minute of asking. It may take some time but Christ promises us that if we seek Him, we will find Him. Ask the Lord for the wisdom and discipline to chase after Him. If the Lord has promised it, we have no reason to doubt it. He will reveal Himself in His timing.

Questions

1. Why do you think James says that it is important to ask in faith and not doubt?
2. Why do you think it is so easy for people to struggle with doubt?
3. What are some ways that you can overcome doubt?
4. Why do you think it is important to ask the Lord for wisdom?

Day 3

Scripture: James 1:9-15

⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. ¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

Devotional

I thought about breaking up verses 9-11 and 12-15 into 2 different days. After reading it more carefully, I began to see how these 2 sections of Scripture really connect. I wish I had these verses written out on a whiteboard so I could show you all the ways that they connect but we will look mainly at the lowly brother of verse 9. What James means when he says, "let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation" is that the lowly Christian believer has more of a reason to rejoice than the richest person in the world. The poor Christian has the greatest treasure of all because Christ has exalted him. Verses 10-11 point to the fading of riches, while highlighting the eternal treasure of the Gospel that lasts forever. Verse 12 returns to the lowly brother as it points to another treasure that they receive: the crown of life. His life is an echo of what we read in verses 2-4. Then in verses 13-15 we return to the rich person that is tempted by all the riches that Satan and the world has to offer and this leads to death. We see that we as Christians have much to boast about, but that boast is never about us. It is solely for the Lord our God.

Questions

1. What does it mean for a Christian to boast in their exaltation?
2. When a Christian boasts in their exaltation, who are they giving the credit to? Themselves or God?
3. What are some ways that you can overcome temptations?

Day 4

Scripture: James 1:16-21

¹⁶“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. ¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Devotional

Every good thing that we have is a gift of God. When you think of just how fallen we are because of our sin, it is amazing that He gives us anything at all. The only thing we really deserve is His wrath but He has lavished us with His grace. Because we have seen all the good things that the Lord has given us, we should be inspired to do good to others. The Lord’s righteousness shines to us as something that we should pursue. We know His goodness, we have seen His righteousness, and because we have witnessed this, we make every effort to practice righteousness. James is telling us that if we want to be like God, we need to put away the sins that are designed to separate us from God. If we have seen that the Lord is good, why would we want to go back to the things that we know are bad? We have received good gift after good gift from our Heavenly Father. He is all that we need. Pursue the good gifts that He has given to you.

Questions

1. What are some of the good gifts that the Lord has given to you?
2. What are some ways that you can practice sharing those gifts with others?
3. What is something that you are willing to get rid of in order to get closer to the Lord?
4. Why do you think that it is important for Christians to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger?

Day 5

Scripture: James 1:22-27

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. ²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

Devotional

When I read this section of Scripture, my mind almost instantly goes to 1 John 3:18. "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." I think we see the same principles here in what James is saying in James 1. James sees the importance of not just talking the talk, but walking the walk. The last thing that this world needs are people that claim to be Christian but whose lives look exactly like the rest of the world. We as Christians are called to stand out, to be a city on a hill. If all we are doing is hearing the Word of God but not living it out, what will be the purpose of hearing it? The sad reality is that there may be several of you that are reading this who have spent their entire lives hearing the Word of God but have done nothing to show that you have received it. James tells us that if all we do is hear the Word and do nothing with it, it is worthless. I don't want to spend my life hearing a worthless religion. My prayer is that when people look at us, they think, "Man! They are on fire for the Gospel!"

Questions

1. What are some ways that you can be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer?
2. We are not meant to walk the Christian life alone. Can you think of one person in your life that would be committed to being a doer of God's Word with you?
3. James tells us that we will be blessed as we actively live out our faith. What are some ways that you can think of that we will be blessed in?

Day 6

Scripture: James 2:1-7

“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?”

Devotional

Partiality is one of those things that we do not often think about. I’m sure that if I were to ask you if you were guilty of showing partiality or favoritism, you would probably say no. I think deep down, we all are guilty of practicing it. When you walk into a room, who are the people or the person that you often gravitate towards? Isn’t it usually the people that look like you, dress like you, talk like you? Be honest, it probably is. One of the beautiful things about Christianity is that it brings people from every nation, language, race, and gender into the family of God. I’ve heard it said that through Jesus, you have more in common with a Middle Eastern Christian believer than you have with an American nonbeliever. So, when you walk into the Church, do you see a group of people that have all been brought together by the saving work of Jesus Christ? My hope is that you do because it is through His blood that we have been brought together. We need to embrace that unity that we have in the Gospel. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Questions

1. Why do you think that it is so easy for us to practice partiality or favoritism?
2. Do you ever stop and think about how much you have in common with other believers?
3. What do you think needs to change in your life in order for you to stop showing partiality?

Day 7

Scripture: James 2:8-13

⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

Devotional

Let's say that you lived your entire life and you were good 99.99% of the time. Do you think that 99.99% would mean that you were good enough to get into Heaven? Or do you think that .01% would be bad enough to keep you from Heaven? According to the Bible, if you are guilty of that .01%, you are not righteous enough to get into Heaven on your own. The problem is that all have fallen short of the glory of God and we are all guilty of sin. If we are guilty of 1, we are guilty of it all. Outside of Jesus, no one has ever lived that was completely innocent. Fortunately for us, Jesus succeeded in the Law where we have all failed. This is known as Christ's active obedience. R.C. Sproul summarizes it like this: “The active obedience refers to His whole life of obeying the Law of God whereby He qualifies to be the Savior. He qualifies to be the Lamb without blemish. He qualifies for the song, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,” through His total righteousness. He fulfills the Law's demands, and if you remember the covenant with Moses, everybody who fulfills the Law receives the blessing, those who disobey the Law receive the curse.” Jesus fulfilled all of the Law's commands so that we wouldn't have to. The blessing that He received, He has bestowed to all that are followers of Him.

Questions

1. What is the active obedience of Christ?
2. Do you think it is fair if you live a good life and still don't get to Heaven because of sin?
3. Why do you think it is so important for God to not look over sin?
4. Do you believe that God's mercy triumphs over judgement?

Day 8

Scripture: James 2:14-26

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

Devotional

Here we have one of the most debated sections in all of the Bible. This is a section that Catholics and Protestants have been debating for centuries. One of the primary issues that kickstarted the protestant reformation was based on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. One group taught that Christians are saved by faith + good deeds and another group taught that Christians are saved by faith alone. What I am going to do is address 2 issues that people struggle with in regards to this passage. Today we will address justification by faith alone and tomorrow we will address if there is a contradiction between what James says here and what Paul teaches throughout his epistles. It’s easy to see why people would struggle with this passage because it definitely sounds as if James is saying salvation is based on works + faith. I believe that you can find the answer in verse 18. James says, “show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” I believe that when you look at this verse along with the rest of what James says, you will see that he is not attributing his salvation to his works. Instead, he is highlighting that his works are evidence of the faith that he has. It is his active faith that leads into his good works and it is because of those good works, his faith is evident in his life. A living faith will always result in good works. If we say that we have faith but there is nothing to show from it, can we really say that we have faith? Therefore, good works are the result of faith, not the basis of salvation.

Day 9

Scripture: James 2:14-26

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

Devotional

Fair warning, this is a 2 pager! Many that argue that the Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions will usually look at James 2 and Romans 3-5 as being at odds with each other. One of the main arguments is found in Romans 3:28 when Paul says, "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." This definitely seems to be at odds with what James says in verses 17 and 20. Ironically, both Paul and James use Abraham as support for their argument. In Romans 4:2-3, ²"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Meanwhile, James says that Abraham was justified when he offered Isaac on the alter. In Romans 4, Paul appeals to Genesis 15 where we see that Abraham believed in God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Therefore, in God's eyes, Abraham was already declared righteous prior to the birth of Isaac. James agrees in verse 23 that Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteousness, therefore, James is agreeing with Paul. A key clue to this mystery is found in what Paul says in Galatians 5:6. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love." Here we see that both Paul and James agree that faith is made evident through works. Paul and James would both

agree that Abraham had faith, and it was his faith that led him to do his works. Another argument towards both Paul and James being in agreement is in Galatians 2. Paul says in verses 1-2, "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain." Paul decided to go to the very starting point of Christianity to make sure that he was not preaching a false Gospel. He wanted to make sure that his preaching lined up with that of the original Apostles. In verse 6, Paul says, "⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me." This shows us that the very Gospel that Paul was teaching was the same Gospel that was being taught by the Apostles. Then in verse 9 we read, "⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised." Here we see that James was in full agreement with what Paul's Gospel was containing. They were preaching the same thing. It would be insane to think that Paul could say that him and James were in complete agreement if they disagreed over one of the most important aspects of salvation! Therefore, I think it is easy for us to see that Paul and James do not contradict each other in the slightest and they are both preaching salvation by faith alone and that faith is made evident by the works of the believers.

Additional Resources

No questions for today but if you are still confused about what Paul and James are saying, John Piper has an excellent resource called , "*Does James Contradict Paul*" that can definitely help. Chris Bruno also has a good resource on The Gospel Coalition.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/does-james-contradict-paul>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/james-really-contradict-paul/>

Day 10

Scripture: James 3:1-12

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Devotional

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” sounds like a cute little saying that inspires us to not think too much about some of the things that people say but it isn’t true. Words can hurt. A lot. If words couldn’t hurt, I doubt James would have said that they are a world of unrighteousness, evil, deadly poison, etc. It’s hard to tame the tongue. It’s hard to keep an eye on what we are saying because we don’t usually seem to think about what we are saying. Christians are called to be encouragers. We are called to show love to those that are around us in both word and deed. With the very mouth that we yell at a loved one, we are called to speak out the Gospel. Our words can hurt. Words can make someone join a church or leave it. As a follower of Jesus, you are called to set your minds on things above (Col. 3:2) and speak of those things. It will require discipline but it can be done.

Questions

1. Why is it so hard for us to speak in a God-honoring way sometimes?
2. What are some ways that you can practice “taming the tongue”?

Day 11

Scripture: James 3:13-18

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

Devotional

If you were the wisest person in the world but you did not use that wisdom to advance the Kingdom of God, would that wisdom have any eternal significance? According to James, the answer would be no. The only wisdom that truly lasts is the wisdom that comes from the Lord. With the wisdom that He gives us, we are called to do good works in the meekness of our wisdom. The wisdom that the Lord gives is good and it should completely change the character of the Christian that has it. The Christian that has received the wisdom of the Lord is at peace with those around him. They are gentle and thoughtful of others. They are willing to listen, obey, and correct when needed. They are not stingy but are filled with mercy. Aren't these all qualities that you would want? It would be a wise decision for you to pursue them.

Questions

1. What are some differences between people that possess Godly wisdom and earthly wisdom?
2. Do you see any similarities between what James says here about wisdom and what he says about wisdom in James 1:5-8?
3. Why is it important for a Christian to display Godly wisdom?

Day 12

Scripture: James 4:1-5

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?”

Devotional

James has discovered that the primary root of all divisions within the church are desire. It appears that in the churches that he is writing to that they were not desiring the things of the Lord and this was causing infighting within the church. Unfortunately, not much of that has changed over the last couple thousand years. Church members continue to war with each other over things that ultimately will not have any eternal significance. When we desire things for the wrong reasons, God will not grant what we ask for. If our hearts have been changed by the Gospel, we should desire the good gifts that the Lord has in store for us. As long as people within the church desire worldly things, there will always be a chance of us falling into the trap that James describes here. It is important that we pursue reconciliation with each other. If we desire the good of the other person, we will hardly have any time to pursue our own desires.

Questions

1. Why do you think James sees envy and desire as one of the primary issues within the Church?
2. Why do you think it is hard for you to desire good things for someone that you might not like?
3. Why do you think that friendship with the world means that we are enemies of God?

Day 13

Scripture: James 4:6-10

⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

Devotional

Satan cannot stand in the presence of the saint that is fully reliant on and submitting to Christ. To fully submit to Christ, we need to be humble. No prideful Christian will ever be able to stand against the attacks of the Devil. A Christian that is fully devoted and relying on Jesus will be able to stand firmly against Satan's attack. Humility can be hard, but it is possible to obtain it. How do we know that? Because "He gives more grace." As if the initial call of grace were not enough, God bestows an even greater supply of grace to help sustain His children. John 1:16 says, "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." God has overfilled our cup with His grace and it is by His grace that we can submit humbly to Him. Satan will not be able to tear down the one that Christ has built up. As we humbly submit to the Lord, we are saying that every aspect of our lives belongs to Him. If all of our life is devoted to Jesus, there is nothing that Satan can offer us that will outshine what we have in Jesus.

Questions

1. What does it mean to submit yourself to God?
2. Why do you think that grace is so important for Christians?
3. What do you think James means when he says that if we submit humbly to the Lord, we will be exalted? (Verse 10)

Day 14

Scripture: James 4:11-12

¹¹Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹²There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy.

But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

Devotional

James spent a large portion of chapter 3 talking about the danger of words. Now towards the end of chapter 4, he returns to the issue. He is continuing to remind his readers of the importance of Christian fellowship. If we want to fellowship with each other the way that the Lord intended, we can't be speaking evil of one another. We should speak highly of those around us both publicly and privately. If you want to avoid speaking badly of other people, remind yourself just how desperate you are for God's grace every day. I know that apart from Christ, I am a sinner that is severed from God. It was only through grace that I have been brought near to Him. I know that there is nothing good in me that made the Lord give grace. It's hard to speak bad of someone, when you realize how bad you are yourself. J.I. Packer said, "holy people glory, not in their holiness, but in Christ's cross; for the holiest saint is never more than a justified sinner and never sees himself in any other way." You both need God's grace and you have both been purchased by Christ's blood. Each day should be a reminder that we are only here because of grace. Tim Keller gives us some good food for thought: "You are worse than you think you are, but also far more loved than you feel you are."

Questions

1. What do you think one of the main dangers are of 2 Christians speaking badly towards each other?
2. What are some ways that you can start encouraging someone that you don't get along with?
3. Why is grace so important when it comes to talking to others?

Day 15

Scripture: James 4:13-17

¹³“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit” — ¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”

Devotional

Here we see James rebuking the person that tries to make plans without any regard for the Lord's sovereignty over all things. We have the tendency to live our lives as if God were not in control of all things. This is a horrible way to live. God sees time in a way that we do not. He knows everything that has ever happened or ever will happen. With that in mind, we cannot afford to make plans as if God was not in control of all things. Now this isn't to say that we should live our lives as if tomorrow doesn't matter. The Bible does talk about us making good decisions to prepare for our futures (Proverbs 6). When it comes to your future, it is entirely in the Lord's hands. We are here on this planet only for a moment and we should want to make the most of it. The way to live your best life now is not by saying, “I want to look out for myself and do all that I can to make a profit for myself.” The best way to live your life is by saying, “If the Lord wills.”

Questions

1. In what ways does God knowledge about the future inspire you to live for Him?
2. Why do you think it is important to consider the Lord when you are thinking about things in your future?
3. Do you trust the Lord's will for your life?

Day 16

Scripture: James 5:1-6

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ²Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.”

Devotional

The Bible has a lot to say about money doesn't it? Do you want to know what the Bible never says about money? That money in and of itself is evil. Money is often seen as a gift from the Lord. But wait, what about 1 Timothy 6:10 that says money is the root of all evil? Good point! Here's the thing, we often neglect to read the words right before that which says that the love of money is the root of all evil. This means that if your heart's desire is money, that's bad. Anything that we desire above Christ is evil. The love of money pursues greed and pride and pride is one of the greatest issues that mankind faces. Having money is not necessarily a bad thing. A few verses later in 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul tells Timothy, “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty or riches but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.” Riches are good things as long as they are not the main thing. If all of our hope is in our stuff, that stuff will one day fade away. Our hope needs to be in the One that is forever.

Questions

1. Do you think that it is easy to be rich and still pursue God?
2. What is one thing that you want to do with the resources that God has given you that you can bless others with?
3. Challenge: Find one person in your life that you can do something for with the resources that God has given you.

Day 17

Scripture: James 5:7-11

⁷Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

Devotional

As followers of Christ, we are in the same family line of the great saints in history. We are in the line of prophets, apostles, missionaries, leaders, and amazing preachers. Like the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12, “we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.” Every believer in history has looked ahead to when they will be with the Lord forever. Some have even suffered horribly as they have waited for Him. James reminds us that we are all to be patient because the Lord is at hand. We know that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy so we know to not lose heart. If you are going through a difficult time right now, know that the Lord has a purpose in your trial. James uses the example of Job to show us that God really is working behind the scenes in our lives. John Piper once said, “God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them.” Don’t lose heart. The Lord is at hand.

Questions

1. Does it encourage you to think about all the other Christians in history that you are a part of the family of God with?
2. What are some lessons in patience that you can learn from the life of Job?
3. Why do you think it is hard to see the Lord’s compassion and mercy when things are not going well?

Day 18

Scripture: James 5:12

¹²But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.”

Devotional

We as Christians are expected to be people whose words can be trusted. We shouldn't be a group of people that are loose with the truth. If we have been trusted with the Word of Truth, that truth should be on our tongues. What James says here in verse 12 is similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 5:33-37. In verse 37, Jesus gives the same command by saying, “let what you say be simply yes or no; anything more than this comes from evil.” James not only confirms the words of Jesus, but he encourages us to live them out. We can't be one foot in, one foot out when it comes to telling the truth. We can't sway between yes and no. We have been trusted with the truth of the Gospel; therefore, our lives and our words should be covered in truth. As Paul tells us in Colossians 4:6, “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

Questions

1. Why is speaking the truth important for Christians?
2. Can you think of a moment in your life where not telling the truth pushed someone away from Jesus?
3. What do you think Paul means when he says that our speech should always be gracious?

Day 19

Scripture: James 5:13-16

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Devotional

The Bible encourages us to confess our sins to each other. This doesn't mean that we have to go to a priest and to confession in order to have our sins absolved (Christ serves as our great High Priest). It does remind us that we were not meant to live the Christian life alone. We are called to confess our sins to each other so that we can pursue healing. This isn't necessary physical healing, although that is mentioned in verse 14, but a more spiritual restoration of one's heart. I think in these verses we see the importance of accountability. It is important to have a mature believer in your life that you can come to for wisdom and correction. Maybe it's a parent or a pastor? Whoever it is, you want it to be someone that you can trust and someone that has been walking in the faith longer than you have. You don't want a blind leading the blind scenario.

Questions

1. Why is it important for Christians to confess their sins to each other?
2. How can confessing our sins to each other lead towards spiritual healing?
3. Who is a mature believer in your life that you can turn to for guidance?

Day 20

Scripture: James 5:16-18

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.”

Devotional

I love teaching about Elijah. I think the main reason that I do is that he is so relatable. In the life of Elijah, we see a man that experiences all of the emotions that we do. We see confidence, fear, hope, dismay, and that’s all in about 2 chapters! Where else are you going to see someone get so overwhelmed by life that God literally tells them to have a snack and take a nap? (1 Kings 19) James is pointing out that Elijah was a great man, but what made him great was what the Lord did through him. James highlights Elijah’s prayer life as a model for us as Christians to follow. It was the Lord that made Elijah great, not the other way around. Because Elijah was human just as we are, we can go before the Lord in prayer with the same level of confidence that Elijah has. That’s the kind of access that we have to our Heavenly Father. Even where Elijah stumbled, we know that we serve a perfect risen Savior. We are certain that Jesus is the greater Elijah.

Questions

1. In 1 Kings 19, the Lord tells Elijah to rest. Rest is important. Do you have a day to rest in your work week?
2. The Bible is full of people that acted just like we do. Can you think of one other person in the Bible that acts similar to you?
3. Elijah had a powerful prayer life. What is your prayer time like?

Day 21

Scripture: James 5:19-20

“¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Devotional

You did it! You made it through all 21 days of this Bible study! Give yourself a pat on the back! Anyways, let's finish strong. Like the classic hymn says, we as Christians are prone to wander. We have the tendency to lose sight of what is most important and we often need to be brought back to what really matters. We stray into sinful patterns and behaviors and it is important that we are a part of a body of believers that calls us out when this begins to happen. If you are wandering in sin, I don't think a mature believer is judging you, they are warning you and hoping to guide you back into the truth. The care of your soul is incredibly important. One of the great gifts of the church is that we are surrounded by other people that care about your soul and want you to get closer to Jesus. When we wander away from what is right, we need to remember what really matters. We need to remember that Jesus died to save you from those sins that you have gone back to wandering with. Just because you are saved, that doesn't give you an excuse to sin (Romans 6:1). Sin is still dangerous. You wouldn't want to play with the fangs of a snake just because the head was chopped off. The Church is here for you. The Church is here for me. If you feel like you are wandering, the Church is here to help bring you home.

Questions

1. What lesson from this study did you find the most beneficial for you?
2. Are you a part of a church that you trust to lead you towards the truth if you start wandering in sin?
3. Are you comfortable confessing your sins to other believers?
4. What are some ways that you can combat sin in your life?