



“Preparing to Plant”

James provided instruction to his readers that would serve as a test of their faith. True faith manifests in specific ways. James wrote how a person who claims to live by faith should be living. His letter issues over 50 instructions (commands) regarding faith accompanied by divine insights to motivate the implementation of that instruction into our life. A One of the main things that tests our faith is trials. James recorded numerous instructions and insights regarding the divine response to trials.

I. Faith's response to trials 1:2-18

- A. Consider it all Joy knowing trials produce endurance.
- B. Continue enduring knowing endurance produces maturity
- C. Confidently ask God for wisdom knowing He will give it.
- D. Focus on your spiritual riches. (Instruction #4)
- E. God rewards endurance 1:12

Keep your eyes on reward. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

From Preaching the Word - James: Faith That Works.

In 1952, Florence Chadwick stepped off Catalina Island, California, into the waters of the Pacific Ocean, determined to swim to the mainland. An experienced swimmer, she had already made history as the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. The weather that day was foggy and chilly; Florence could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam steadily for fifteen hours. When she begged to be taken out of the water, her mother, in a boat alongside her, told her that she was close and that she could make it. But Florence, physically and emotionally exhausted, stopped swimming and was pulled into the boat. It wasn't until she was on board that she discovered the shore was less than half a mile away. At a news conference the next day, she said, "All I could see was the fog. . . I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."

Following are some summary thoughts for you review now addressed in sermon. Last week we explored James' instruction regarding our response to temptation. Some circumstances in life test our resolve to trust God no matter what. Some circumstances test our resolve to live according to God's ways. We also face things in life that tempt us to make choices contrary to God's ways. One is a difficulty presenting an opportunity to develop our faith and grow. Other choices in life intend to destroy our faith.

A couple weeks ago we explored James' instruction to take responsibility for our poor choices and understand that failure to address the desires of our flesh lead to death and destruction.

F. Don't blame God for temptations 1:13-18

1. Instruction: Don't blame God for temptation

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God."

OR

Continually resist or stop saying "I am being tempted by God" when tempted.

2. Insights into why we can't blame God

- a. *God cannot be tempted by evil.*
- b. *God does not tempt anyone with evil*
- c. *Temptation arises from within ourselves*

James pinpointed the source and course of temptation. Temptation comes from unaddressed unhealthy inner desires. Bonhoeffer, in his book entitled *Temptation* (page 33), describes how this works:

With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh.... It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money.... Joy in

God is... extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real... Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God.... The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us. The questions present themselves: "Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?" "Is it really not permitted to me, yes—expected of me, now, here, in my particular situation, to appease desire?"... It is here that everything within me rises up against the Word of God.

James identified the source of temptation is our unbridled passion. He further described the course that such unbridled passion takes.

Step one: Temptation comes from unbridled passion or desire.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. James 1:14

Before conversion, these desires had full manifestation and rule.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the desires of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Ephesians 2:1-3

Everyone without Christ functions according to unbridled self-centered longings energized by Satan in a devil-designed and directed world system. At regeneration, God imbeds a new set of longings in the fore of our being totally opposed to the old ones.

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should live in them. Ephesians 2:10

The devil propagates his “system of living”, God promotes His. Regeneration enables us to choose, each moment, which system we live by. This sets up an intense internal conflict for the born-again Christian.

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you really want to do. Galatians 5:17

The old longings, still embedded in our brain and body, don't completely disappear at new birth, but God offers the means to live by the new longings and deny the old.

Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25

Continually consider yourselves dead to sin living to God in Christ Jesus. Stop letting sin reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Stop presenting your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. Romans 6:11-13

James describes what happens when we fail to constantly deny those old desires still lurking around in our body and vying for expression.

But each person is continually tempted being continually dragged away and enticed by his own desire.

Unmanaged desires continually drag us away (from the right path) and entice us (to the wrong path) like a fish to a baited hook to live contrary to our new God-imbedded longings. When we don't aggressively address those desires, they gain the power to derail us.

Step two: Opportunity plus desire births sin

Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin... 1:15

When we allow these desires to go unabated and they meet an opportunity (conception) a baby results; sin is born. Neglecting continual soul maintenance provides a landing field for temptation. Let's say I have not

addressed a strong passion for notoriety. An opportunity comes along to become famous that involves a spiritual compromise of some kind. Not having completely surrendered my desires to Jesus, I am more likely to make poor choices that exclude Him to satisfy my desire for fame and prestige. If at some point I purposefully addressed that desire and humbly surrendered my desires to Jesus, opportunities to sin have less influence on my life choices.

When unaddressed desires meet unevaluated opportunity rejection of God (sin) results. Acting contrary to God's direction is the core of all sin. What should we do when we succumb to temptation conceive and "birth" sin? Confess it and repent. Don't allow sin to mature. James warns us what happens if we fail to deal with it right away.

Step Three: Unaddressed sin leads to untimely death

...and sin, having come to full maturity continually brings forth death.

Death here can reference actual physical death or death in terms of separation and darkness in any aspect of our life. Notice the contrast to what James instructed regarding endurance.

Endurance leads to our maturity and quality of life.

Indulgence leads to sin's maturity and death.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins Ephesians 2:1

Paul, along with James wanted them to know that sin brings consequences.

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7-8

James wanted them to know that temptation, in the sense of solicitation to do evil, absolutely does not come from God. Stop blaming God for your susceptibility to temptation. Because God cannot be tempted by evil. Because God does not tempt anyone to evil.

Temptation comes from our own unbridled, unaddressed passions or desires that make us more susceptible and vulnerable to temptation. When unbridled passion encounters opportunity, sin is conceived and later born. When we allow that sin to mature, it brings devastation and eventually death. James provides instruction and insight for bridling the flesh all through his short letter. He ended this section with one more insight refuting the notion that God tempts us.

d. God only gives good things

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every 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. James 1:16-17

Don't believe the lie that God is not good or does evil. That is one of Satan's "go to" deceptions. God is good and always gives good gifts. He doesn't fluctuate like the continually shifting heavenly bodies. He remains constant.

Don't let Satan or anyone tell you otherwise.

Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. Psalm 86:4-5

You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. Psalm 119:68

Following are notes from the today's message.

James addressed the most important element of soul care or maintenance. Without it, we become weak and susceptible to temptation. The writer of Psalm 119 wrote...

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11

The word will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the word. Jesus skillfully applied the implanted truth to Satan's attempt to derail Him.

I think the next eight verses emphasize the absolute necessity of the word of truth in relation to enduring testing and evading temptation. James includes three basic instructions concerning the word of truth. I will include them under the general instruction to Receive and practice the truth. This passage includes much to think about and explore. The side trips on this journey abound. I will attempt to keep our attention fixed on the central idea intended here, which is to receive and practice the implanted truth which is able to save your soul.

G. Receive and practice the implanted word of truth. 1:18-27

1. The truth is the foundation of new birth. 1:18

Of His own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Many connect this verse with the previous insight concerning the good gifts of God. Even though new birth is certainly a great gift of a loving Father and God is the author of new life not death, I also find a connection to the following verses which instruct us on the value of the word of truth in relation to enduring trial and evading temptation. Sin and Satan bring forth (birth) death. Our loving Father brings forth (births) life through His eternal truth.

James identified the Word of truth as the source of our new life. Our good Father "brought us forth" by the word of truth. Scripture reinforces that truth in numerous ways. A couple observations to note. God took the initiative i.e. "of His own will".

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, HE has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... 1 Peter 1:3

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

New birth is inseparably linked to the word of truth.

you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God... 1 Peter 1:23

Faith (that saves) comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

Hearing the truth is essential both to our birth and our growth.

Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Galatians 3:2-3

God's word brought for the original creation. God's word brings forth the new creation. He brought us for by His truth to be His new creation.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

These initial Christ-followers became the first of many to follow. The word of truth enables us to endure trial and evade temptation. It resembles a seed planted in the ground which produces a plant.

To sprout into productive plant, the ground must be properly prepared.

2. Prepare to receive the implanted truth 19-21a

Planting season is upon us. Some of you have started planting already. Every gardener understands the necessity of preparing the soil. No matter the quality of seed, it won't grow in poor soil. The seed of the word will not bear fruit if sown in an unprepared, unreceptive heart. Some people get plenty of exposure to the teaching of the word of God but seem to exhibit little fruit.

For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 2 Tim 3:6-7

Reading your Bible every day doesn't guarantee a changed life.

Jesus taught His disciples the importance of sowing the truth in good soil. He described three heart issues preventing fruit and one producing fruit.

Now the parable (of the sower) is this: The seed is the word of God.

In all scenarios, the seed is the same. The difference in result had to do with the quality of the soil.

The hard heart that suppresses the truth

The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

Jesus describes a heart that does not allow the word to penetrate. It is a heart unreceptive to God or His word. The truth sits on the top of the ground allowing Satan to remove it from memory. Paul talked about those who suppress the truth and their heart became darkened. There must be a tilling and softening of the soil before the seed of truth takes root.

For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Jeremiah 4:3

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. Hosea 10:12

I believe that prayer serves to soften soil to receive the word of God.

The shallow heart that abandons the truth

And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe and endure for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arise on account of the word immediately they fall away. Mark 4:17; Mat 13:21; Luke 8:10

This is the heart that is only partially softened. There is not depth of repentance. It responds to the truth but does not fully commit it. This is the fair-weather, feel-good heart.

The distracted sinful heart that chokes the truth

And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit proves unfruitful and does not mature. Luke 8:11; Matt 13:22; Mk 4:18-19

This is the heart that neglects to deal with life's distractions. This is the heart susceptible to temptation because of a failure to harness the latent fleshly desires.

The humble receptive heart that embraces the truth

As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word and accept it, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with endurance thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundred-fold. Luke 8:9-15; Matt 13:8; Mark 4:20

This is the heart that humbly and honestly allows the word of God to penetrate their life and they receive the word implanted which can transform the soul. The variable is the soil, the receptive heart. This is the heart that allows the word to accomplish God's purposes.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11

James called them to understand (know this) some heart issues that interfere with soul transformation. These issues prevent the righteousness of God from being formed in us. James called his readers to address those issues before they could receive the life transforming implanted word of truth.

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Let every person continually be...

- 1. Quick or ready to hear as opposed to a reluctance to hear. (hard heart)**
- 2. Slow to speak. You are not hearing if you are talking.**
- 3. Slow to anger**

An angry heart is not a receptive heart. Anger hinders the penetration of truth to the soul. It also hampers clear understanding of the truth. Rather than seek to understand the truth to see God’s will accomplished, we will use the truth to force our will to be accomplished. Rather than speak the truth in love and ministry, we speak the truth in anger and manipulation. James clearly differentiates an anger stirred by God from an anger that arises from our own selfish passions. Such anger never achieves God’s righteous ends. It may get us what we want but alienates those we wish to win. The subject of anger is extensive and deserves more time to explore.

Know this! All anger is not sin. All anger is not righteous. It befits us to know the difference.

Since an unprepared heart prevents good seed germination, make sure the soil is properly prepared. He urged them to cultivate a soft receptive heart. He urged them to do some weeding before planting.

He urged them to put away, lay aside, cast off, put off all “filthiness” or dirt.

Deal with any moral issues. Deal with the selfish passions. Deal with the sin conceived by yielding to temptation. Deal with anything evil or wickedness in attitudes, actions or thought.

Paul called believers to put off the old to make room for the new.

The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Romans 13:12-14

They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:19-24

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with

its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Colossians 3:5-10

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1

Put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:1-3

3. Receive the implanted the truth 1:21b

receive with meekness the implanted word being able to save your souls.

Only when we humble ourselves before God will we eagerly allow God to implant the truth in our heart continually able to transform us.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Rom 12:2

James later warns against straying from the truth. The word of God is absolutely essential to life and growth.

The Bible testifies over and over again concerning the value and benefit of God's word, the word of Christ.

1. **It is the source of faith**
2. **It is the source of life**
3. **It is the source of new birth**
4. **It is the source of spiritual growth**
5. **It is the source of blessing.**
6. **It is the source of hope.**
7. **It is the source of answered prayer. John 15:6**
8. **It purifies and sanctifies 1 Tim 2:15**
9. **It transforms and revives the soul.**
10. **It continually nourishes the soul.**
11. **It works.**
12. **It brings stability in the storms of life (wise man's house on the rock)**
13. **It defends against the lies of the enemy.**
14. **It defeats the enemy as a sword.**
15. **It keeps from sin.**
16. **It exposes sin.**
17. **It brings freedom from sin.**
18. **Psalm 19**
 - **It makes wise the simple**
 - **It rejoices the heart**
 - **It enlightens the eyes.**
 - **It endures forever.**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16

Next message will explore the blessing associated with to hearing AND doing the word of God.

Look into the mirror.

What does it say about the soil of your heart?

Is your heart ready to receive the word of truth implanted?

Maybe your hard heart needs tilling and softening.

Maybe your shallow heart needs strengthening of commitment.

Maybe your distracted heart needs weeding.

Attitudes, actions, thoughts

Unchecked desires causing susceptibility to temptation.

Cares of this life.

Desire for riches

Pursuit of pleasure

Actively Prepare your heart to receive the implanted word.

Humbly receive the implanted word.

God designed that word to take root in good soil and produce abundant fruit.

It is that implanted word of truth that brings transformation to a troubled soul.

What are you doing to expose yourself to the word at every opportunity?

It can't just be on Sundays. It is DAILY BREAD.