

James 1:19-27 - An Intro to James

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Date: 21 June 2026

Preacher: Andrew Gordon

[0 : 00] Good morning Church. The reading is from James 1, 19-27, page 1213 in Church Bible.

! My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this.! Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourself. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror, and after looking at himself goes away, and immediately forget what he looks like.

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.

[1 : 26] Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep tight rein on their tongue deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. The religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress, and keep ourselves from being polluted by the world.

This is the word of God. Amen. Let's pray, shall we? Let's pray. Almighty Father, we thank you for all that you have revealed to us as people, Lord.

We thank you, Father, for all that you have said to us in the past and taught us. Father, we pray that you would speak to us today, that you would open our eyes, Lord, that we might see marvelous things in your law.

There are good things, beautiful things, magnificent things, the greatest being yourself. But, Father, the truth is we can easily miss it. Open our minds, Father. Open our hearts, Lord.

May you be glorified. Amen. Amen. Very good morning to you. Andrew Gordon, Donington Evangelical Church, Pastor of former West Kilburnite back in the day.

[2 : 51] Okay. And, yeah, a few days ago. Yeah, so we're looking at James chapter one. Pastor Steve's asked me to do an intro on this.

So the aim is that you will read the book. Yeah, that's the aim. You'll read the book. You'll study it. Hopefully you're going to enjoy it as well.

So that's the plan. So what I'm going to do is an intro on the intro. I said we're going to start. And then I'm going to lock in on one subject that I think is going to be the key subject for us.

So James one verse one. Who is James? And what is this? James, verse one, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes scattered among the nations.

This is a letter. This is a letter written any time between 44, 49, a D, 2,000 years old.

[3 : 57] Who is James? James identifies himself in this verse as a servant. So he's speaking to fellow servants. Well, not only is he a servant, he's the Lord's half brother.

Not only is he a half brother and a servant. He's also a child of God. So he's speaking to fellow servants, but siblings, spiritual siblings.

Who is he writing to? One verse one, the 12 tribes. So Jewish believers around the Roman Empire. He's talking to them.

He's given them instructions so that they will become like Christ. And as a result, draw people to the Lord Jesus in the Empire.

But they'll be attracted to this community. New Testament teaching. To them, for us. To them, for us.

[5 : 04] To the Jewish Christians in the first century. But for us, for our understanding. This is not a museum piece. Okay, just something we sort of walk by and go, Ooh, that's nice, isn't it?

Oh, that's very interesting. No, actually, it is to be applied. So in terms of style. If you contrast it with say, a letter from Paul.

Paul will have his truth. Bam. And then he'll have his application. Bam. I got my truth. I got my commands. James is slightly different. He will just go, I've got my truth. I'm going to sprinkle it briefly.

And then bang, I've got some commands for you. I've got command after command after command. I've got lots of commands. I've got multi commands. Loads and loads of them.

About 50 in about five chapters. Loads of them. They come at you. It's like a boxer. Who's not just delivering the one punch. Do you remember the one punch boxers? Yeah, you may do. He's going combo.

[6:08] Yeah. I'm going one after the other. I'm coming at you. So some people find James really encouraging and comforting.

So they welcome the straightness of James. And they're often straight people. Straight talking people like the book of James. Others can find it a bit intimidating, a bit overwhelming.

So I was once in a group of actually mainly younger believers. And they were getting into a right pickle really about the book of James. They were really getting a bit, almost agitated with the number of commands.

They found it sort of overwhelming. The focus I think of James is God as father. Good for Father's Day, isn't it? Something to remember.

Father's Day, God as father. That is the main emphasis. And that can be a corrective to our church communities. Where we may overemphasize even the son of God, if we can do that.

[7:12] And the Holy Spirit, but forget the father. So it's going to help us to keep us aligned. Trinity, father, son, Holy Spirit. Where does he draw his teaching from?

Well, I think in terms of teaching. I'm beginning to think this guy's a genius. Yeah, Holy Spirit. But he's a genius. Because what he does is. He will take the law of Moses.

He will take the Proverbs. He will take the sermon on the Mount. And he will weave them together. Yeah, weave them together. Like a mum preparing her daughter for school.

Yeah, nice big plat. He just weaves them together. In a marvelous way. Outline. What's the outline of the book? Previously, before I studied it.

I thought there is none. Yeah, he's just binging random things here, there and everywhere. But with some study, with a few thoughts. I think what he does is.

[8:15] Chapter one. He will introduce a number of issues. Chapters two to five. He'll come back to all those issues again. So that's what he's trying to do.

Chapter one is a long introduction. And therefore, it's probably one of the longest introductions in the New Testament. Even though it's a very short book.

What are the subjects raised? Wealth. Poverty. Favoritism. Class, as we call it in Britain.

Provision. Prayer. Sickness. Temptation. Spiritual warfare. Wisdom. Faith.

Faith. And words. Words. Words. The words that God speaks. The words that I speak. The words that others will speak to me.

[9:12] And that's what we're going to look at for the rest of our time. That's the one issue I'm going to center on. Words. So. Let's think first of all about the words of God.

Have a look at verse 18. Verse 18. It says there. Verse 18. He. That's God. Chose to give us birth. That's this church. Through the word of truth. That we might be a kind of first fruits. Yet. A new creation. Of all that he has made. So.

Spiritually. If you're a Christian here this morning. How did you get here? What did God do? What did God use? And we're told. In this verse. He uses his word.

Yeah. He uses what he's revealed. And what has been recorded. In what we call the scriptures. That is his tool of choice. With regards to taking people.

[10:17] Out of darkness. Into his marvelous light. Okay. Okay. Have you been rescued from darkness? How did it happen? How are you in light?

It is because. Him using his word. Either first hand. Okay. So you studied it yourself. Or second hand. Someone taught you. Someone told you.

That's how you came to faith. Through his word. His word. So. If you're a person here this morning. And you're saying. Look.

I'd love God to forgive me. I'd love to have this eternal life. That these Christians seem to have. How are you going to get it? Stick close to the word.

Stick close to the word. Hear the word. Read the word. Study the word. Ask questions about the word. Pray about the word. The word is important.

[11:13] The word is key. It's what God is going to use. To bring you to life. Stay near the word. And ask God to do something in your heart.

As he does that. So. That's how. The Jewish Christians. How they got spiritual life.

That's how the believers here got spiritual life. That's how. If you're not a Christian yet. That's how you're going to get life. It is through. The word. That's what he says. So.

That's number one. Moving on. Verse 21. Not just God uses his word. He also plants the word. And this could be one of the key ideas.

Really. In the whole book. He says there in verse 21. Doesn't he says. Therefore. Get rid of all moral filth. Okay. Which may or may not be sexual.

[12:12] And the evil that is so prevalent. And humbly. Accept the word. Planted in you. Which can save you. Save you. Where Paul will talk about the Holy Spirit.

James will talk about the implanted word. Paul will talk about the spirit. James will talk about the effect of the spirit. The work of the spirit.

What he will do. That the spirit is the author of the scriptures. And what he will do is. He will take that word. And plant it deep. Within an.

Within it. Within an individual. That's what he's going to do. Deep into the mind. Deep into the heart. Deep into the psyche.

That there is a desire then for Jesus. And there is a strength. That his words can bring. And that's going to lift the burden. For some of you.

[13:15] Some of you who are a bit burdened down. By all these commands. That you're given by James. If you're a person. Who's a bit. Who's a bit burdened. By all these commands. I say good for you.

Yeah. Good for you. Because. It means you're taking things seriously. At least you're sincere. At least the weight of the commands. Is upon you. The good news is. He's going to give you the desire.

He's going to give you the desire. He's going to give you the mind. He's going to give you the heart. And it does tell us. Our faith is supernatural. Our faith is supernatural.

It is outside of ourselves. It is not just. Me trying harder. Doing better. Searching for the hero inside myself. I thought you could do some searching inside my heart.

But there's no hero inside myself. I'll tell you that much. Yeah. But. But what the good news is. It doesn't depend on you. It doesn't depend on me. It depends. On what he has done.

[14:14] So you may say. When you think of all the commands in James. I could never do that. I just can't do it. I can't change. You can't change. You can't change.

But. He can change. He has changed you. He is changing you. He will change you. Yeah. The work has started. Already. It's great news.

Here we go. We're doing well. What are we seeing here? We're seeing. That change is possible. And so we think. So why haven't I changed?

Why am I not changing? What's going wrong? Is something going wrong? And this is where James. The master teacher. The master pastor.

Okay. James now is the master pastor. He's going to help them see what's going wrong. Here is reason number one. Why it's not happening. He says there. Verse 21. Therefore get rid of all moral filth.

[15:19] And the evil that is so prevalent. Reason number one. Why you're not coming forth. Why I'm not coming forth. Unconfessed rebellion.

Unconfessed sin. I want the. I want implanted words. But I also want to hang on to my own behavior. And what James says is. You need to give it up.

You need to confess it. A bit like we confessed this morning. Oh you're there. I don't know if you're there. But if you're there. We confessed right at the beginning. As a group. And as a result.

What do we believe is going to happen? We believe that God will take us at our word. And we can move forward. Confess. Because God wants to do something. In your lives.

You're a believer. As a group. God wants to do something. In your life. Move on. Move forward. Let the word change you. Because it is inevitable. It's inevitable.

[16:20] If you. If you resist. Temptation. You will inevitably grow. Let it flow. Let it flow. Let the word do his work.

He's begun to do it. Let him continue. Let him continue. Reason number one. Reason number two. Lack of growth. Is deception. And the worst kind of deception.

Have you ever been conned? Has anyone ever lied to you? Has someone pulled the wool over your eyes? It's terrible isn't it? When someone does that to you. But the worst thing.

Is when you're pulling the wool over your own eyes. So what does he say? Verse 22. Do not merely listen to the word. And so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says. So this is the second reason. Self deception. I'm fooling myself. No one's fooling me. I'm doing it all of my own accord.

[17:24] So with regards to the word. You can listen to it. You can study it. You can meditate on it. You can memorize it.

You can have discussions about it. You can read books about it. You can write books about it. You can preach about it. You can preach about it. You can tell youth about it. You can tell kids about it. You can tell strangers about it. Doesn't mean you're doing it. Doesn't mean I'm doing it. Doesn't mean I'm obeying it. There can be a sort of comfort.

But I'm not necessarily applying. So there are countless people. Who will want to argue. Argue about the word of God. Some in the church.

Some outside it. They love a discussion. That doesn't mean there's any desire. To follow Christ. Doesn't mean there's any desire. To follow him.

[18:24] I had a conversation with a guy. For one hour. Left nominal Christian. Now a Muslim. He was talking for ages. About the Bible. And everything there. You don't want to believe.

It's pretty clear. Do what it says. Do what it says. Doesn't it. Verse 22. Do what it says. Obey it. If it's love. Love your neighbor.

Love your neighbor. Ask God to help you. If it is to love God. Love God. Ask for his help. To do that. If it is go and make disciples of all nations. Go and make disciples of all nations.

Ask him for his help. If it is. Trust in the resurrection and death of the Lord Jesus. For your sins. Do it. Do it. Don't deceive yourselves.

Now the last one I said. I've got a suspicion. Because I sort of know some of the people in this church. That. That has been taught regularly. taught regularly. Week by week.

[19:24] You're hearing it. But have you done it? Have you actually prayed and said. I trust in your death and resurrection. Please have mercy. On me.

Let's not deceive ourselves. Let's do it. So verse 24 25. We've got two sort of memorable. Illustrations for you there.

And for me. And the first one is. Is the man or the woman. Who just can't get ready. They keep going back to the mirror. Because they forget what they look like.

A bit like. So. Those people you see on the tubes. Bakerloo line. They take out their phone. They sort themselves out. At Queen's Park. They put it away. And made a veil.

They've got it back out of Paddington. They've tucked it away. The Regions Park. They've got it out again. And then up to the circus. You're getting off. And they're still doing it. They're just forever looking. Yeah.

[20:20] It's a comical. But also a pathetic. A pathetic. Pathetic. Pathetic. Picture. Pathetic picture. Um. That is the person who will not apply the word. That's the person who won't.

If you don't apply the word. You will end up forgetting the word. Yeah. Use it or lose it. That's what they say. Don't they? Use it or lose it. You've got to apply it. As you hear it.

Now you may not be able to apply everything straight away. But you should look for opportunities. I should look for opportunities. Uh. The mirror man. The mirror woman.

Who's on the. On her Apple phone. Or his Apple phone. Going all the way up the tube. That is not you. If you're a Christian. That is not you.

Um. That is not God's will for you. That is not his plan for you. Uh. As. Our brothers and sisters would say down the road. That is not his portion. That's not his portion for you.

[21:17] So what is. Verse 25. Yeah. The person. Who looks intently. Into the perfect law that gives freedom.

And continues to do this. Not forgetting what he has heard. But doing it. He will be blessed. In what he or she. Does. Uh. I wonder if you know any law students.

Or if you are a law student. I wonder if law students. Enjoy the law. I wonder. I know they sort of. That they're going to. They're going to splurge out. When they get to an exam. Or into court. Some sort of court. I wonder if law students.

I wonder if law students. Enjoy the law. I wonder. I wonder. I know they sort of. Sort of tuck things up in their brains. That they're going to. They're going to splurge out.

When they get to an exam. Or into court. Some sort of court. But do they enjoy? Yeah. Do you. Are they the people who sit in the corner of a library going. Oh. Love it.

[22 : 14] Love it. I'm beautiful. I think I saw the people. imagine the law student who's excited and enjoys the law Bible says Christian that is you that is you when you come to his word you're not just reading it because you have to but you're getting enjoyment as you're learning more about your father and your God and your Lord that's it you're not the mirror person you can be the mirror person but I believe God is calling you to something higher and me which is the person who loves the law and what does it mean freedom freedom that's what it means doesn't it I'm freed from my fears from my destructive habits and I'm free to serve God to learn from him to love him just to enjoy him enjoy him that is the call you're being called this day to freedom and enjoyment so God's word is a tool for life God's word implanted in your mind and in your heart okay let's talk about my words verse 26 if anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue he deceives himself and his religion is worthless or some people might say worthless as my dad would say or worthless business now religion is it good or is it bad some people in our culture think it's good some people think it's bad I think say like those in power governments they can't make up their mind they think it's sometimes good sometimes bad it's probably good in this respect uh you Christians are more likely to pay your taxes okay so you're probably better it's nice that you're you've got this religious thing as long as it doesn't get out of control James would say good or bad religion depends depends how do we measure growth spiritual growth how do we measure spiritual maturity the kind of maturity whereby um you would say I'm going to make that person a youth leader I'm going to make that person a Sunday school teacher I'm going to put that person in a position of influence and power what are you looking for many Christians appear to focus on knowledge okay how much I know from the Bible experience my dealings with God my personal encounters with him or gifting the type of gifts a person has

James says think about their words watch their words watch what they say watch when they say it watch how they see it say it their ability to say something the times when they say little or the self-control to sometimes say absolutely nothing watch that person because that will help you to decide whether that person should have a big role in your fellowship that's one of the things you're looking for their words now my culture my temperament you tell people straight yeah you get to the point you tell people straight yeah if somebody has a go at you most of the time you'll have a go back and you may add a bit of extras or as my mum would say a bit of hot pepper sauce that's what you're going to get if you get on my nerves now um James will say that's not the kingdom that's not the way yeah you're gonna have to drop the hot pepper sauce yeah because if you go down that road be clear it is another religion it's not the same thing it's now something different you have to go with God's way and so the prayer for many of us is well please forgive me yeah we we have we ever had to go at someone when we shouldn't have father please forgive me please help me help me to believe that you have implanted your word in my heart free me from gossip free me from lying free me from exaggeration free me from having a go at people and the Lord will answer he'll definitely help us final thing okay so we're coming near the end you people who are getting hot and falling asleep um we've got the word of others okay word of others we're gonna finish with that word of others so what is the norm when it comes to discussions with people one another the reality is this people can often be boring they can they can make me very boring they can say really um important things in a really boring way yeah um and people can be unkind and people can be um say silly things ridiculous things that is our context with what we're going to hear in a moment yeah we blurt things out in frustration in anger in fear in irritation and in impatience so are we ready for the revolution verse 19 brothers and sisters take note of this okay underline it in your bible if there is a bible you've got yours um everyone should be quick to listen slow to speak slow to speak and slow to become angry for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that god requires never mind trotsky never mind nelson mandela never mind fidel castro this is revolution this is

revolution this is entirely different to how our world operates yeah forget those sort of shea gevara t-shirts yeah they should have james picture there because this is absolutely radical if we put it into practice even by a little bit it will transform homes it will transform schools it will transform family and politics and industry and sports what are we told here uh we're all going to get involved it's everyone yeah the old time believer cannot say oh it's nothing to do with me this is who i am this is my personality you just all have to get used no it doesn't say that everyone yeah i'm a young believer i was only baptized a few a couple of weeks ago i'm just drying myself down from the baptism no it applies to you as well everyone here means everyone we're all to get involved whatever our temperament whether we are i'm going to strike back and give us some hot pepper sauce or whether i am mr choir or miss choir not saying much at all it's for everyone everyone has to be involved in this and it says be quick to listen be quick to listen be focused be intentional be patient be clarifying slow to speak don't give an answer straight away necessarily you don't have to why do we feel we always need to answer everyone straight away give yourself time if you need more time say i need to go away and think about it think about what we're saying don't just blurt things out and then slow to anger slow to anger people can say silly things can't they provocative things yeah a guy that got me on on the tubes last week um he was fortunate a little bit because i got my earphones here listening to the cricket but he he slated me for being too slow to move too slow to move out the way people are always trying to wind you up especially in london we got to be cool calm down take it easy wasn't it wasn't that the advert that they had um the mayor of london had one didn't he about about people um having beef in traffic and generally having a go at each other and i think that the headline was be calm cool down londoners stop losing your rag and that's got to be us doesn't it quick to listen slow to speak slow to anger in a world where people don't really listen yeah where people say silly things and people are provoked by silly things who are the people who are going to stand out the group who are applying verse 19 however imperfectly they are going to stand out like a sore thumb so in terms of church advertising yeah you can you can you can you can do all kinds of things don't you you can put some nice um uh posters at the front yeah you can get people grinning and smiling being really well dressed yeah you can get the pastor dancing and church dancing doing the funky chicken on tiktok but the best way to do it is a community a community because if the pastor does the funky chicken yeah and we've got nice posters outside and i come in i think wow this is a church that guys doing the funky chicken okay and whatever and i see people arguing and squabbling with each other not listening and what's going to happen i'm going to think they're just like me there's no difference to this crowd this is the training ground the church is the training ground where you can make mistakes you can say something stupid and people are not going to cancel you my final point there's no cancelling in the kingdom of god is there there can't be can there that's not what jesus does there will be confrontation there should be gentle correction but cancelling that's a different religion it's a different religion and so uh this is challenging isn't it and if you know something of my character you know this is a major challenge for me absolutely why's my daughter laughing um they're funny you you span the crowd and i've got someone grinning from your own family lives with you um but this but we can do this the words implanted in your mind and in your heart he has changed you more than you realize he is changing you and he will change you do what it says first step let's sort out your relationship with god yeah speak to some of the regulars speak to the leaders let's sort out what this is all about enough with the hearing move on move forward what's the next step he's calling you to have the word implanted in yourself let's pray shall we our heavenly father thank you thank you father for doing that work in our hearts and in our minds help us not to believe uh the lies that come from our own heart that we can't change you have changed us already the very fact that we sit here in a warm building father we're listening to to your word is that is a sign of change father continue your great work knit this um community together that they will be a powerful witness lord uh to um a world lord where people do not honor the words of one another father to you be the glory and to your son be the glory amen amen